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How I make a picture

by R.F. ROBERT FAWCETT

lesson 1

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Robert Fawcett

2 The first step — making the doodle

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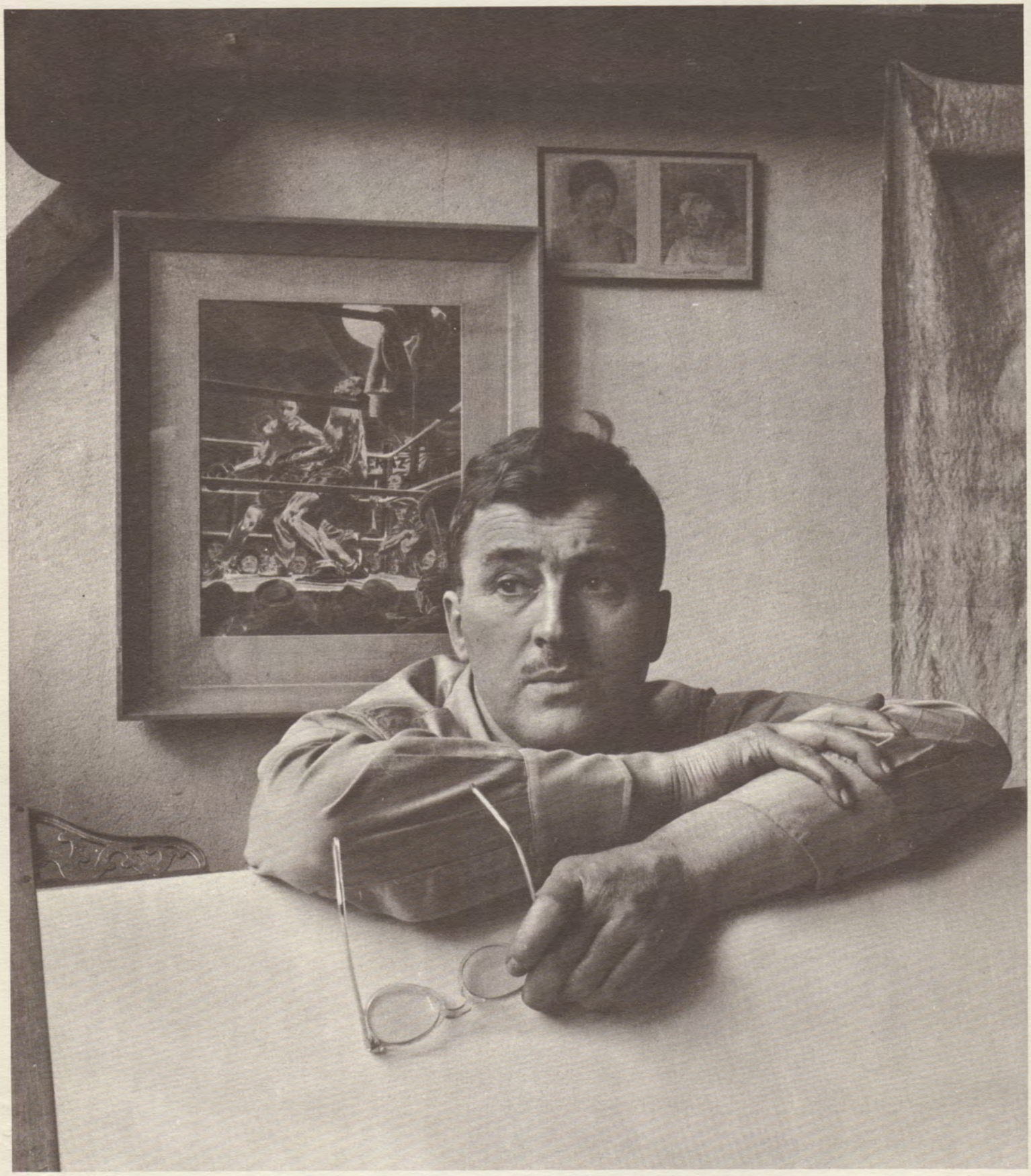

Artist Robert Fawcett whose outstanding work has caused him to be called "the illustrator's illustrator."

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Meet Robert Fawcett

by Alden Hatch

Robert Fawcett is the illustrator's illustrator. This does not infer that his pictures lack popular appeal—if they did, *The Saturday Evening Post* would hardly pay him on their highest scale. But it does mean that only a trained artist can appreciate the excellence of the drawing and the masterful use of color that are combined in his brilliant technique. Although he has been turning out superb work for twenty-five years, it was not until 1945 that Fawcett was dramatically brought to a realization of his own standing in this profession. "I felt that the things I did were fairly good," he says, "but I did not believe that anyone else thought much of them."

This strange ignorance was due to the fact that Fawcett worked apart. His tower was made, not of ivory, but of music which was at once a form of escape and a source of inspiration. His social contacts with the world of art were largely confined to the editors and art directors who bought his work; his friends were nearly all musicians. When he began illustrating for *The Post* in 1944, Fawcett joined the Illustrators' Club. Shortly thereafter, a colleague, Graham Kaye, suggested that he give one of the evening lectures that the Club puts on for the benefit of students. "I'm willing," said Fawcett, "but who wants to hear me?"

On the night of the lecture the Club was jammed. People were standing in the doorways and backed up the corridor, straining to hear his words. Most amazing of all, the audience was not composed of students, but of the established illustrators who had come to listen and to learn. When Fawcett ended his talk, they gave him an ovation, crowding around to ask eager questions, praising his work with a discrimination that showed they had followed it for years.

Since that night, Bob Fawcett no longer holds aloof from his fellows. He is very popular with the crowd and one of the active members of the Club. But these new social contacts have not influenced his work. In his own phrase, "It all comes from inside."

Fawcett was born outside of London in 1903. His father was an amateur artist, who earned a living working in a distillery. He was determined that his son should have all the things he had so desperately desired. As soon as Bob could hold a pencil, his father urged him to draw, giving him such crude instruction as he was capable of. He even paid the boy to make pictures for him and never stopped hounding him on. Such urging was not necessary for the passion to draw had entered Bob's being by the paternal genes—there was nothing else in the world he wanted to do.

"When I began to earn five dollars a week," Fawcett says, "I spent almost every nickel of it buying old magazines to study the illustrations. I was wholly absorbed in learning to draw, perhaps too much so . . ."

Few boys were so completely possessed by the passion to make pictures as Bob Fawcett. He was, and still is, demon-ridden.

When Bob was ten years old his father somehow found the money to emigrate with his family to Canada. They settled in Winnipeg which was then experiencing a real estate boom and Fawcett senior earned some money, and worked off some of his yen for art, by drawing pictures of real estate developments for the promoters. He was clever at falsifying the perspective so that the new lots looked as though they were right in the middle of town.

Bob went to school in Winnipeg until he was fourteen. Then he abruptly ended his formal education—it didn't mean a thing to him. He was apprenticed to an engraving shop, where he worked on "horrible things for mail order catalogues."

In 1919, the Fawcetts moved to New York. Seventeen-year-old Bob was left in charge of the family in the Grand Central Station while his father looked for temporary lodgings. There was one thing in New York Bob wanted above all else to see, and he felt he could not wait another second. He parked his mother and the other children in the waiting room, and slipped over to the New York Public Library for a peak at its famous Wyeth originals.

In New York, Bob got the same kind of routine job he had held in Winnipeg, but the drudgery did not matter. Nor did the low pay, except that it took so long to save enough for the next step. By spending nothing beyond the frugal minimum, he accumulated $1,000 by 1922, which he figured was enough to live on for a year in London. Contrary to the usual result of such computations, he succeeded in eking out two years abroad.

The famous Slade School of London was the object of Fawcett's pilgrimage. During the two years he attended it, he hardly touched a paint brush, but with all the intensity of his nature he drew and drew and drew with a hard pencil on hard paper, getting the same rigorous training that had made such famous draughtsmen as Augustus John, William Rothenstein, William Orpen and Alphonse Legros.

But for all his absorption in the business of learning his craft, Fawcett did not consider it any more than a means to an end. He was at the same time seeking cultural experience. "It was an

awakening," he says. "Before that I was a dope. There I became aware of music. Now, it is vastly important to me."

Young Fawcett also made sorties from the world of Academia to look with delighted wonder at the unorthodox paintings of such queer fellows as Braque, Matisse, Picasso and Roualt.

France, too, opened vistas for him. A group of students at Slade rented a cottage near Rouen in Normandy for a few francs a year, where they spent wonderful holidays. Bob didn't bother with any of the famous art schools in Paris. "The classes there were nothing compared to the Slade for serious work," he says. "We would just go to the Louvre and look at the pictures—steep ourselves. This is real studying, the other is just the acquisition of mechanical technique."

Fawcett came back to New York in 1924, blazing with determination to make a career for himself in painting. He was so completely infected by the curious snobbery toward commercial art, that he signed the illustrations he began to do only with initials, for fear of becoming declassé. He still signs his paintings R.F., but now it is with pride and the hope that the signature will be recognized as his trade-mark.

Fawcett did only enough commercial work to keep himself alive, while painting furiously on his easel pictures. They were good, so good that two years later one of the galleries on Fifty-Seventh Street gave him a one-man show. Two-thirds of the pictures he exhibited were sold; the path to his chosen career lay open before him; and at that moment he gave it up.

Bob Fawcett is a perfectionist. He walked through the back streets of London and the artistic sweatshops of Winnipeg and New York with his ideals intact and his eyes fixed on a shining horizon. The commercial side of fine art utterly disillusioned him. In the gallery on Fifty-Seventh Street he saw the paintings into which he had put the distillation of soul-sweat, being crammed down the throats of customers by sleek salesmen in custom built clothes and phoney artistic chatter. He was revolted. Destroyed. Right then, he determined that he would earn money by honest commercial work. His easel pictures would be kept for his own pleasure, to give to his friends or sold to those who sought him out. He has no regrets.

As soon as Fawcett made his decision, he was greeted with open arms by the purveyors of commercial art. He did some excellent advertising work and many finely drawn illustrations for several different magazines. "I began to consider myself something of a jinx," he says, "because the magazines I worked for so frequently folded. Among them were *The Mentor, Delineator* and *Scribner's*. Luckily *The Post* is still holding out!"

Fawcett's economic struggle ended abruptly when he embraced commercial art but his inner turmoil continued. Though he had more commissions than he needed, he was unsure of himself and timid in his contacts with his clients. As a result he sometimes got pushed around. On the other hand, he was never greedy for money and, therefore, did not attempt mass production methods. Nor would he accept a job when its requirements seemed to call for phoney painting.

Fawcett's lack of confidence arose neither from doubt as to his technical ability nor from economic anxiety. They sprang from inner lack of security, a sort of road block in his subconscious mind that kept him bottled up. He had not found himself either as an artist or a person.

This was his time of aloofness, when he avoided contacts with his own colleagues and found solace in music and the company of musicians. He acquired an intimate knowledge of almost the whole of musical literature and earned the friendship of such men as Heifetz, Jacobsen and many others. Despite his love of music, Fawcett plays no instrument. "The noises I'd make!" he exclaimed. "I know too much about music now to try."

His real reason is that he feels an artist should have a one track mind. The lost ones are those who have dissipated their interests —spread themselves too thin. "Music feeds me," he says, "I can take in rather than give out."

Fawcett's psychological struggle was first resolved by the great reagent, war. In the fall of 1943, O.W.I asked him to go to England to draw propaganda pictures to be dropped on enemy territory. Fawcett enthusiastically accepted and set out in a fine fervor of patriotism.

But in London, Fawcett found that he had no job. The Air Force couldn't be bothered with dropping pictures. "Bombs are better," they said.

Fawcett hopefully hung around London for six months, on the chance of finding something useful to do. It was a depressing experience. He felt so frustrated that the infrequent bombings actually seemed a bright spot—at least they were exciting. His one constructive contribution to the war effort was to do some posters for Italian-American friendship that he hears were put up on every backhouse in Italy.

Despite his disillusionment, Fawcett returned to America with his mental decks somehow cleared. Then the best thing that can happen to a commercial artist happened to him. He made *The Post*.

For years, his agent had been taking samples of his work to the Philadelphia pundits. Word always came back that his stuff was too severe, too masculine. He couldn't draw pretty girls. Then, out of a clear sky, Art Editor Ken Stuart asked him to lunch. Over the coffee he said, "I think you should be in our magazine."

"I've been trying for years," Bob answered.

"I'll send you some stories," Stuart said.

It happened as quickly as that. Since then, Fawcett has had plain sailing with *The Post*. Not one of his pictures has ever come back, nor have they ever even asked him to change one. The great show window of *The Post* brought him fame and thus helped to build the needed confidence that has liberated his spirit.

I went to see Bob Fawcett at his home in Connecticut. It is an artist's dream come true; a little New England farmhouse, set on a wooded hilltop. The rooms are low ceilinged and furnished with such authentic American pieces that if one of Bob's colonial characters should drop in for a pewter mug of ale, he would feel completely at home.

Back of the house is a woodshed piled to the top with corded logs and behind that a fine red barn. This is Bob's studio. The

big raftered room does not suggest his methodical way of work; it is a haphazard conglomeration of the tools of his trade, odd props, frames, pictures, books and junk.

Fawcett is a big man who worries a little about his waistline. In repose his face looks tired, but when an idea touches him off, he is as eager as a boy and his dark eyes shoot sparks. He is proudly, but not egotistically, aware of his mastery of the technique of drawing and the use of color. In regard to the latter, he laughingly admitted to being slightly color blind, "a little trouble with reds and greens. But I can still read the names on the tubes."

Over a whiskey and soda, Fawcett and I discussed his philosophy of art. The key to it is the great disillusionment of Fifty-Seventh Street, but now he takes a more mellow view of that episode. "It was my fault about the show," he said. "I objected to their method of selling, but that may have been a weakness in me. I was too sensitive—insecure inside."

"Are you doing any fine art now?" I asked him.

"I say everything I do is fine art," Bob shot back.

He went on to observe that the guilt complex commercial artists feel because they are so well paid, forces them to an exaggerated respect for the men of the Fifty-Seventh Street emporiums. He thinks that the feeling that the latter are somehow morally superior is nonsense and that it kills your own work. There are, admittedly, limitations on illustration. It must be the hand-maiden of the author's story and is therefore interpretive rather than creative.

"Within those limitations," he said, "the illustrator can be as much of an artist as he has the power within him. But an illustrator should never forget that his business is to make people read the magazine. We are specialists, and I, for one, am proud of it."

As to the required realism, he added, "People like to see things. What the hell, art always was pictures of something. Just because a new aesthetic theory comes along, are we going to scrap the whole Renaissance? Personally, I make no distinction between fine art—a horrible phrase—and commercial art."

Fawcett feels that illustrators have a terrific responsibility because, "we represent the only view of art, of beauty, to millions of people. If we do less than our best, we cheat them."

He admits that the 13,000,000 readers of *The Post* automatically impose certain limitations upon him. For example, he cannot be quite as sardonic as he would sometimes like, but he feels that he can be completely honest.

In regard to the Institute, for which Fawcett was then preparing his course, he said, "The way I look at it is this, perhaps I can pass on some of the result of thirty years of experience. That will be good for the students. You know I always wanted to teach. Once I even planned to build a school right here. I had it all worked out, the system of teaching, the location of the studios and dormitories—even how to handle the sex angle. I felt then that I could be happy doing a little work of my own, and giving from my own experience to the students. I have abandoned the idea of the school, but not the other. I still know I can teach, that is impart,a knowledge of technique, perhaps a little wisdom, and offer the encouragement of my enthusiasm if the students match it with their own. Beyond that no one can go; the rest is up to them."

Returning to the subject of easel painting as he prefers to call it, Fawcett said, "When I want to go haywire, I just go haywire. I go up to the studio and paint whatever I feel like. Experiment. An inner search. Usually it ends up an abstraction. I just start out with my pen and let it wander not knowing what will come out."

But that pen is guided by a trained hand and what comes out often meets with critical acclaim. Writing of Fawcett in Esquire, Robert Ulrich Godsoe says, "Here is a rich and courageous temperament, an intricate intellect, a very full personality, which, when it freely expresses itself in paint will be expressing something eminently worth meeting."

True to his principle that an artist must be wholly absorbed in his art, all Fawcett's other interests, with the exception of his beloved music, are secondary. He takes little part in the community life of Connecticut, where he lives. In 1924, he married the former Nancy Royce of New Jersey and they have a teen-age daughter, Virginia Carol.

Though his formal education ended so early, Fawcett has never stopped learning. His illustrative work has made him an authority on colonial history; while in the field of music, his knowledge is encyclopedic. Such an intellectual background, combined with his enthusiasm, make him, indeed, "a personality worth meeting."

Robert Fawcett at Home

Robert Fawcett's home in Connecticut is a New England farmhouse set on a wooded hilltop.

This corner of Fawcett's library is furnished with American antiques as is the rest of his home.

Any room in the house is likely to become a temporary studio when the artist becomes intrigued with a new manuscript.

Robert Fawcett

The first step — making the doodle

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Fawcett's man, William, has been with the artist for fifteen years. Among his possible duties is this one of posing for an action sketch.

This is the artist's studio converted from a red barn in back of his home. The stairs lead to a balcony full of props, frames and pictures.

This is a general view of Fawcett's studio. The large,wooden trash box receives much of his preliminary output.

Robert Fawcett

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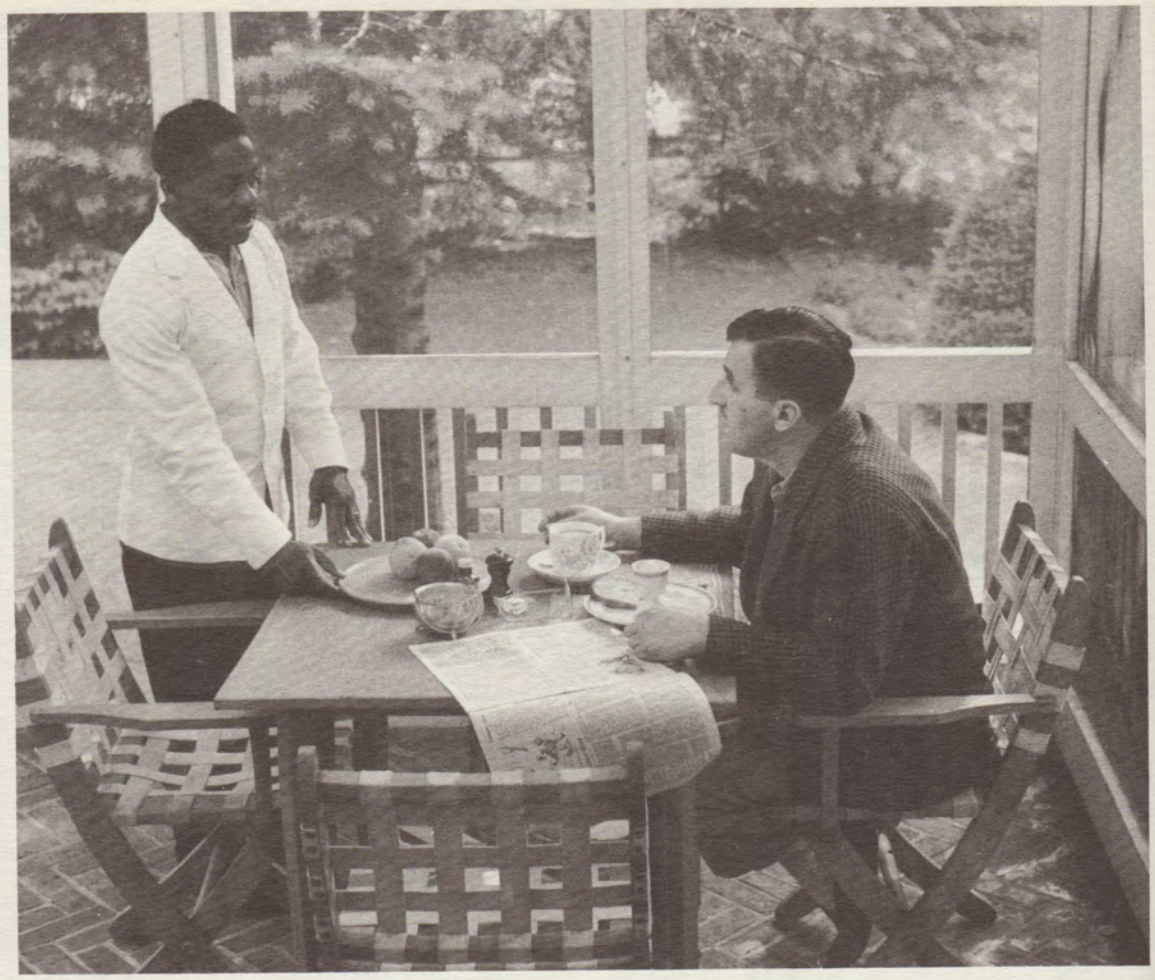

Here, breakfast is served by William who, according to the artist, is the world's best cook and has the knack of anticipating the needs of a temperamental artist.

Here the artist takes time out from painting to practice golf, his favorite sport. His studio is in the background.

Foreword

by Robert Fawcett

You are beginning a course of study during which I will tell you *how* I think and *what* I think about drawing and illustration. I want you to know me and I want to know you through your work.

I assume that you are a serious, well-advanced art student, one who is able and willing to devote considerable time and effort to the study of illustration, perhaps with the idea of improving yourself and making a vocation of this form of art. To such a student, this course will make clear the problems you may expect to encounter and the difficulties you must overcome before your ambition is realized. If you have ability and a will to succeed, none of the problems or difficulties is insurmountable.

I will not lay down any hard and fast rules for you to follow. Any method I describe is mine and *mine alone,* the result of my own training, my experience, my interests—and my shortcomings. Your work submitted to me for criticism will not be judged by any similarity to my own—the exact opposite is desirable. I hope that, among other things, this course will stimulate your imagination and indicate the opportunities in one field of art.

I assume that one reason you are taking this course is that you know about the style of my work and would like to know how I arrived at it so that you can apply some of this knowledge to your own efforts. I also started by studying the work of others, but unfortunately I did not have the benefit of their explanation of how they produced the work I admired.

This will be a personal course in the true sense because, to make it of any value to you, I have been compelled as a first step to examine and analyze myself and my own procedures very thoroughly—something an artist seldom pauses to do. I have found that much cannot be explained but must be "felt." When such examples occur in your own work, I will tell you so and you will understand better what I mean.

In this course I have included some information about materials and their use, but not too much, because this is a personal matter with each student and becomes increasingly more so. The spirit and the aims are the qualities emphasized. I can determine from the work you submit whether you are content to copy and imitate my methods or whether you are doing something much more important—interpreting the information in terms of your own personal needs and capabilities and thus developing individuality.

Each drawing you submit will receive personal attention. Furthermore, nearly all comments about your work will be of a critical nature. This is not bad. I rarely feel kindly toward my own work, so I probably will be no more kindly disposed toward yours. So let us leave the praise to generous friends and relatives while we, together, realize that art, like life. is real and deadly earnest.

Of one thing I am certain. If this course receives your wholehearted attention and intelligent application, you will make progress—much progress. But it is you yourself who must do the work if you are to experience the satisfaction of improvement and attainment. No one else can do this for you. I certainly cannot.

You need not worry about "technique." I surely will not. Your technique is your manner of working, which comes from your manner of thinking and feeling. It will be impossible for you to avoid developing a "style" eventually, but hold off as long as you can. Everyone has a style of walking, talking and conducting himself, but when we begin consciously to cultivate mannerisms and an artificial style, we succeed only in becoming ludicrous. So try to stick to those things in art which are important and honest as you see them and your style will take care of itself.

Perhaps I should say now that I never have been intensely interested in how much money I could derive from art as a vocation except to recognize that the money increases as ability increases. As I have improved as an artist, the money has come —and without seeking it too hard. If the financial rewards of art elude you, my remedy is simple. Study more. Work harder. If art, and illustration in particular, is going to play a large part in your life, you probably have wasted too much time already and have much work to do to make up for the time you have lost.

I started my art career at the age of fourteen as an apprentice in an engraving shop—a good place to learn how art is reproduced. Since I was ten I knew I was going to be an artist and at fourteen I thought I had acquired all the reading, writing and arithmetic I would ever need. I had not, of course, but I had to make up the lack without any further formal schooling.

During the next several years I "graduated" from more small studios and advertising agency art departments than I like to recall. I guess I always felt qualified for a bigger job than the one I had, but my many bosses were unimpressed, so I was regularly and not very regretfully relieved of my duties. Despite being fired at rather regular intervals, I finally saved enough money to go to Europe to study. There began the real awakening in me of humility and seriousness that have lasted up to this moment.

In London I studied drawing continuously for two years, at the Slade School all day and at a crafts school at night—forever drawing, drawing, drawing, with a pencil on hard paper. I have never regretted this Spartan experience because it gave me a knowledge of form, an accurate eye and an obedient hand

Robert Fawcett

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Random pages from old sketch books. I used always to be drawing and I think it pays off. This kind of work should go on constantly around the home and outside to supplement serious finished studies

Robert Fawcett

The first step — making the doodle

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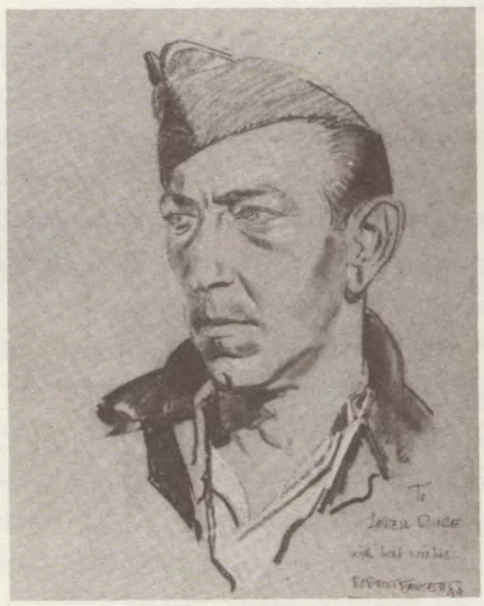
which now make accuracy itself of no particular concern. I was able to forget it and develop what I considered more important qualities, although I never minimize the value of draftsmanship.

Here and now, let me advise you to spend every spare moment developing the coordination of your eye and your hand to acquire greater resources for what is a difficult business at best. Do not be content with a few sketches, framed and hung. Make hundreds, thousands of complete studies, action sketches, composition notes and accurate observations about the visible world all around you. After long practice it will no longer be necessary for you to draw these things, your eye will be always observant and your brain trained to remember. But for you that time probably is far away, so draw constantly, freely, searchingly, courageously, experimentally, lovingly. But forever draw because what you put down is the measure of what you have seen. The more you draw, the more you *will* see.

Seek no formulas. They have no value for the serious student. Make no excuses about materials. They are unimportant. Use those at hand to the limit of their possibilities. Cheap paper and a medium pencil are good for studies. Never stop short of completion and never be afraid of "overworking." Don't stop to admire a partly completed sketch. Try to see what it lacks. Act boldly and firmly, do not be tentative. Let each stroke be a positive statement. Work long and searchingly on a subject which seems to demand it, striving for accuracy. You will do these things instinctively as you develop yourself, your reading, your culture, for only the mature person becomes the ma-



Four of the hundreds of drawings we illustrators made of men in hospitals during the war. I was too interested in searching out character and improving my drawing. Other artists who resorted to a little flattery were more successful at this sort of thing

An early school drawing in red chalk. In London any display of virtuosity was frowned upon. We were painstakingly searching after form, perfecting eye and hand. This is not an old-fashioned procedure, only those who have gone through it know what the "modern" approach is all about

Robert Fawcett

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

The first step — making the doodle

ture artist. I cannot guide you in developing the above qualities except to point out, when you submit a poor or inexpressive drawing, that the lack of some of these qualities has been a drawback to the picture.

The quality of the picture and my procedure in making it are the points you will find stressed in this course. A picture can be fairly good even if the elements in it are poorly drawn, but it will be a better picture if each element is as expressive as it can be made. For example, I consider facial expression comparatively unimportant compared with other factors involved in making a good picture, but when the time arrives for facial expression it should be *right*. All this will be explained in detail as we proceed.

In fact, before you finish this course you probably will be bored by my explanations and will exclaim, "Surely he doesn't think of all these things when he paints a picture!" You will be quite right. I do not, but I must explain to you many things which to me have become instinctive. If I can make you understand these things I do instinctively, I will be doing you the greatest service—if only that you end by avoiding most of them.

I happen to like drawing and painting. It is the only subject I understand well. An understanding parent furthered my ambition, so I did not, like many artists, suffer from lack of encouragement. If anything, I had too much encouragement and it was a hindrance—which is one reason why I will not hinder you with too much admiration. Too much praise causes many a promising student to lessen his efforts.

I assume that you are a person of more than average intelligence or you would not desire to be an artist in the first place. (I also like to think that you have shown more than average intelligence by embarking on this particular course.) The course offers, as I have indicated, no short-cuts, no panaceas. It is a resume of one man's labors in producing pictures which today find a ready market. If you fail to follow and to benefit from what I consider a fairly orderly process in making pictures, I shall be not only disappointed but very unhappy.

I am an enthusiast—and I am a perfectionist. I love good drawings and I love to try to make them. I am enthusiastic about the future of illustration in America and want to contribute to its future by aiding serious and intelligent students of art to establish a sound foundation for work in this field. All I ask is that you match my enthusiasm. That I will be able to judge by the drawings you send to me.

Now just one thing more. I will ask you to make drawings and send them in for criticism. I will never object if you go beyond what I ask. While I can only examine what I request you to send me specifically, I urge you to do many more sketches than you submit. Discard all except those you believe are the best. What I will ask you to do is a minimum amount of work each month and no one ever achieved very much by sticking to the minimum requirements. If you do ten solutions to a problem, and send in one, that one will reflect the work you have done on the other nine because its quality will be better.

While this is a school course, and a serious one, it can also be a most gratifying experience for you, especially if you find that art is absorbing you to the exclusion of almost anything else. A career in art requires this absorption, so it is good to start now. I have never found it to be a hardship and I do not believe that you will.

I would wish you the very best of luck except that I know that luck will play no part in your development. Intelligent, serious application is what will count. And that is up to you.

This is a picture complete in itself because it tells a story. It was done for my own amusement. It is accurate in detail and drawn to resemble an old sporting print. I did it some time ago and would organize it better today. It was originally a labor of love but later won a $1,000 prize from *True*

What Makes A Picture?

The first approach to a magazine illustration

Illustration is descriptive graphic art. It has many forms and many variations, each of which you should consider. In a very general way it may be said to consist of pictures which accompany and amplify written words. Sometimes, however, an illustration can be a thing complete in itself — a picture story — as exemplified in the contemporary work of artists such as Rockwell and Dohanos.

We are going to consider first, illustration as an accompaniment to text. We will, however, ignore one large segment which could be included—cartooning. Cartooning is not really a different category for elements of the cartoon enter some of the best straight illustration as, for example, in the work of Dorne and Williamson. Likewise cartoons often contain elements of other forms of illustration. But, to keep this a personal course, we must adhere to the personal viewpoint and when, in my own work, the cartoon or caricature element enters, I will point it out and explain why.

The form of illustration we are considering now can be divided into that intended for books and that intended for periodicals. Book illustration stems from the first crude wood cuts which were used to decorate the first printed pages and, in general, illustrations for books today are subject to more printing and reproduction restrictions than illustrations for periodicals. Therefore the artist doing magazine illustrations

Actual size detail of one of the imaginary Scottish characters. I became fascinated in drawing the characters and neglected to "pull the picture together"

usually has a wider choice of the medium he can use than if he were doing book illustrations. Magazine illustration might be said to be more in the field of painting than book illustration, although this is a generalization and could be debated. But we will let it stand for the moment.

To generalize again, my attitude on illustration is that it should adorn the printed page and intrigue the page-turner into stopping and reading the story without being too informative. How I try to accomplish this constitutes the subject matter of this course.

The kind of drawings we are going to consider are, in my opinion, among the most difficult to do. If an artist can complete a full picture with each of its elements in place, achieving the right mood and emphasis in each part, and can apply his color so that it takes its place in character with the whole, he is likely to consider some other forms of art rather easy. I believe that as you progress you will have this same feeling and will never regret that at times in this course you will be called upon to do things which seem beyond your powers, even a bit irrelevant. You will notice the gain in your power and in your ability to put things down on paper, and the resulting enthusiasm will give you further creative impetus.

Creating "the mood"

I am a great believer in creating "the mood." By this I mean making the picture reflect the feeling of the story even *before* the reader has identified the subject matter, the separate elements which make up the illustration.

A somber, dramatic story seems naturally to call for somber, dramatic color and simple, mysterious elements with an absence of literalness which will stimulate the reader's imagination. Things are suggested rather than pictured and if the first impression is one of slight puzzlement so much the better. That calls for a second look and we have the reader on the way to looking at the title and starting the story. This primariiy is our job.

Simple, gay stories call for simple, gay treatments. Some of my colleagues in the Institute execute such drawings superlatively well. I do not. My work and my method of procedure stem from my nature as yours will from your nature. My nature happens to be a bit somber, methodical, rebellious, introspective and occasionally satirical. I know this colors my approach to everything I do. Art directors understand this and consider the nature of the artist and the work he is best qualified to do when they assign manuscripts for illustration.

Choosing the situation to illustrate

When I have read a manuscript through once, I already see the picture I want to do. It is invariably the situation I will enjoy doing and one in which I am fairly sure of the result. It is simply impossible for me not to be intrigued by the possibilities of one particular situation over all others. I am asked frequently whether a situation is chosen by an art director for the artist to illustrate or whether the artist uses his own judgment. Sometimes the art director has read the story and makes the choice from his knowledge of the readership of the magazine. Sometimes the selection is

left up to the artist if the editor has confidence in him. Some believe that we work better without restraint and I think they are right in this belief. At least they are right in believing it of me. I always like to select my own situation for an illustration.

Reading the manuscript is the first step in planning an illustration and you must practice this until you know yourself better. Read a classic which contains no illustrations—a short one will do. Then decide what single picture remains in your mind; what best conveys the plot of the story. What picture would enable the most important characters to enter and introduce the most mood-conveying elements? The picture which remains with you usually is the right one unless your selection has been made with your limitations in mind, and has been based on what you fear to tackle. This fear is bad and you must overcome it. That will take courage. The results will not be first-rate at the start when you attempt to do the logical illustration, regardless of your limitations. But it is much better to try and fail, than not to try at all if your selection has had conviction behind it. Keep concentrating on developing yourself, your abilities, your powers, realizing that this is a different business than producing a few pretty drawings for your friends to admire. Perhaps you suspect by now that this is going to be a tough experience for you. It is, but I know you would not have embarked upon this course if you had been looking for something easy.

Study the outline of my procedure which follows from the first sketch to the finished illustration as it appeared in the magazine. Photographs were made at intervals as the drawing proceeded. You will see many other similar sequences showing the development of an illustration in later lessons. With each photograph is a legend indicating the stage of the drawing at the time the photograph was made. I will try to indicate to you what was in my mind as each stage was reached. Thus you will observe my own hesitancy, my changes of mind and the germination and development of the picture idea and the picture itself from beginning to end.

Later I will elaborate upon each step in making an illustration in turn but this serves as an example of the slow building up process. To me, the advantage of such a process is that I am always "under control." When I start to flounder, become indecisive, tentative, I am unhappy. So I try to avoid this. When I read the manuscript, I saw the picture I wanted to make, but the actual production of the illustration from that point became a very methodical process. It required several days, considerable research, a few false starts, and finally a slow building up. It is like any other form of construction except that, instead of using lumber and bricks, we are using elusive, aesthetic elements. However, like a building, the picture when completed must be structurally sound for a poorly constructed picture can start to sag and fall apart just like a poorly constructed house. As you understand more and experience more, you will become sensitive to this danger and preventing it from happening will become second nature. But do not expect to acquire this sensitiveness for a long time.

A person going to look at a house, unless he is an expert, does not know what to look for in construction, in permanence or in value. But he often *feels* these things. He has a feeling, a sort of warning, that the construction is flimsy. The same thing

Robert Fawcett

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

The first step — making the doodle

happens in pictures. Unless construction is sound, even a novice may sense or feel that something is wrong but be unable to explain it. We are going to build pictures which are sound structurally so there can be no comeback. We will do this chiefly for our own satisfaction, just as you might build a house structurally sound for your own satisfaction.

Here I show you my procedural method in your first lesson so you will know what is coming. Later I will break down each stage and explain why I do what I do. There is no mystery about it and I will try to create none. But may I make this point: A professional can show you how to swing a golf club or a tennis racket in a short time. After that you must spend months in practice before the knowledge you have acquired becomes a part of *your own* game. That is the way it will be in this course. I will demonstrate what can be demonstrated—and to me each stage can be demonstrated—to you with all the enthusiasm and imagination I possess. But as the golf pro says, "Now, you'll have to get out and practice." That is doubly true in art. There is no short cut. Only practice makes perfect—or as near perfect as art can

(Text Continued on Page 21)

My procedure from rough sketches to finished illustration

1—Three doodles made after reading the manuscript. Not much seems to be germinating yet, at least not on paper

2—First idea made on tracing pad with a large black pencil and rejected

3—Second idea on tracing pad. I also rejected this one

4—Third idea, and beginning of the formation of concept for the picture

5—Photostat of No. 4 enlarged to drawing size, about twenty inches high

6—This is the finished tracing. The drawing has been somewhat refined

7—Beginning of brush rendering which was made with black ink on Whatman board

8—Second stage of ink rendering. Perhaps you cannot see the traced line but it is there

Robert Fawcett

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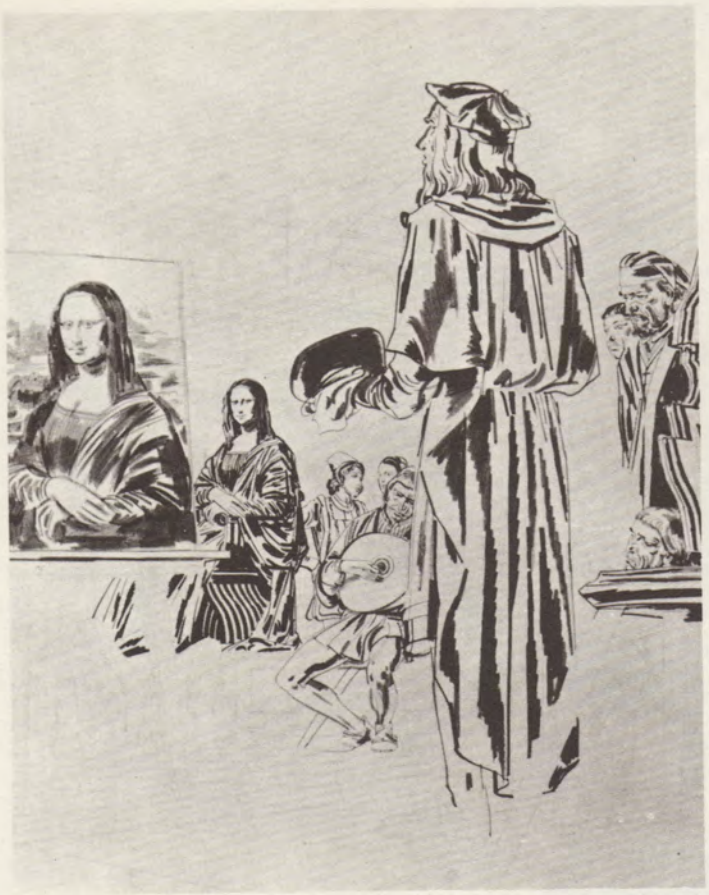
The first step — making the doodle

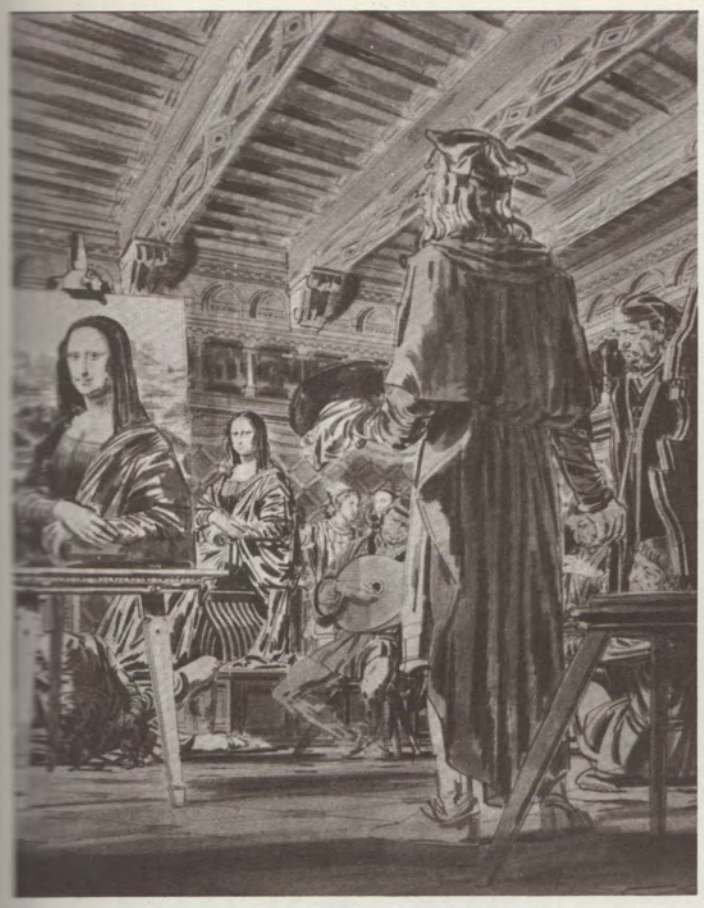


9—This shows how the picture starts to build up bit by bit. I am drawing quite boldly with a blunt brush at this particular stage

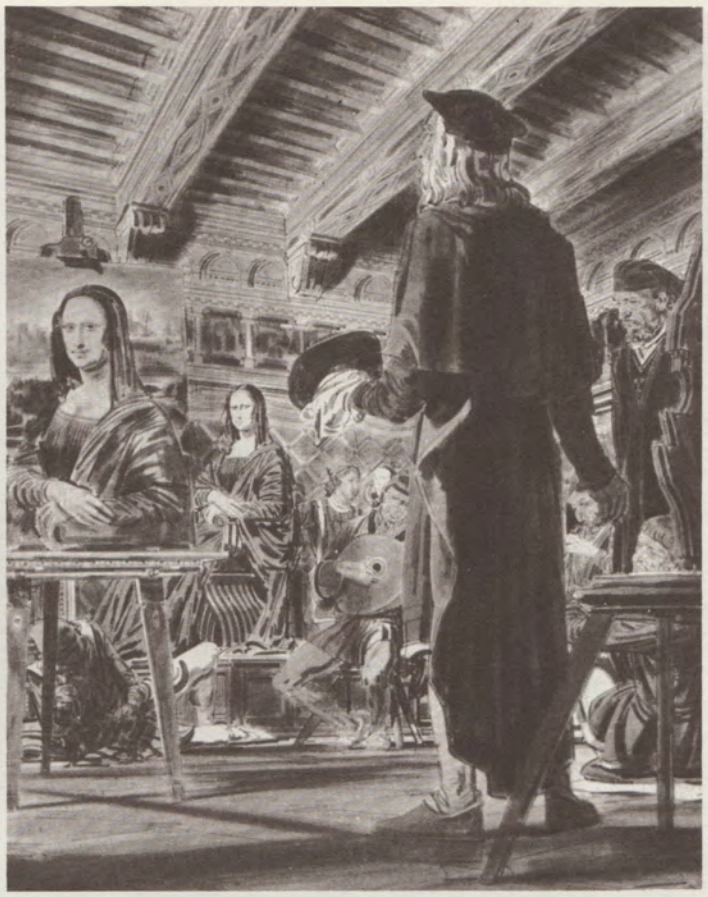
10—Architectural detail begins to appear. This is authoritative "scrap" from library and will help create Fifteenth Century atmosphere

11—More details and the first use of tone in diluted ink. I have taken out and lowered a head which seemed to be resting on the chair

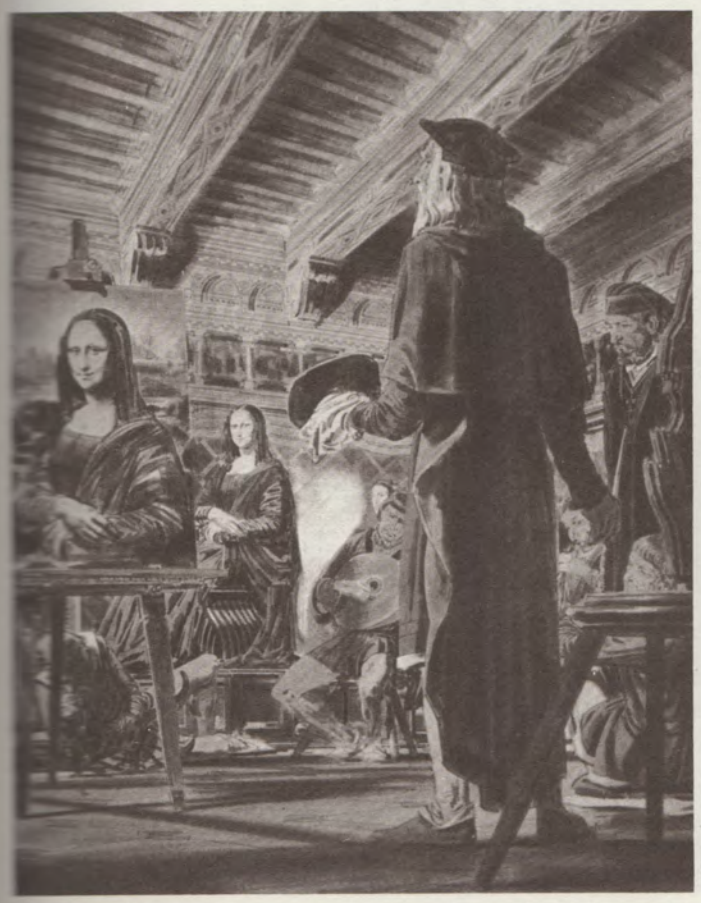
12—The picture starts to take shape. I am now using colored inks applied over the drawing. No longer tentative, the approach is made with confidence



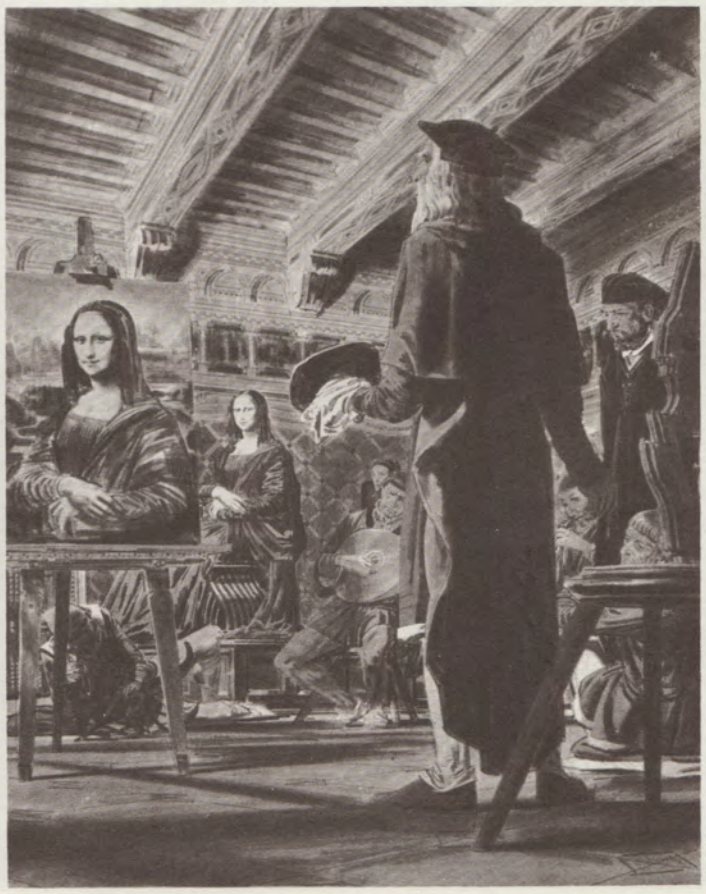
13—Here I start to wash in larger and darker tone and color areas with a large brush, pulling the separate elements together into one statement



14—The picture starts to gain in depth. It has an all-over warmth of color. I now begin to employ opaque tempera where it is needed



15—Now I have taken out a confusing and superfluous figure with a sharp razor blade. The figure had been bothering me for some time

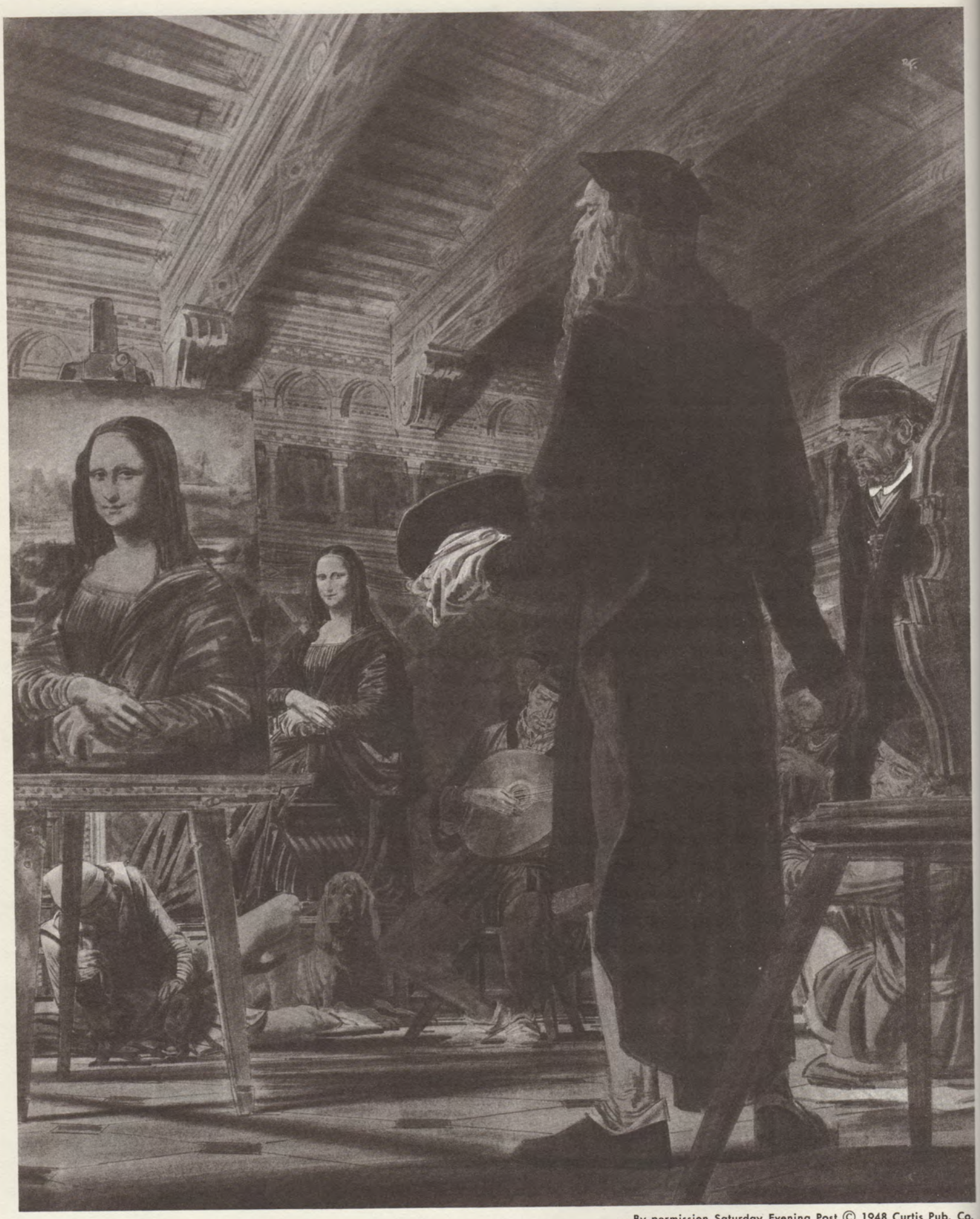


16—Almost finished, except for final articulation of important things, toning down the less important. It is about four days after the first doodles

Robert Fawcett

The first step — making the doodle

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.



—By permission Saturday Evening Post © 1948 Curtis Pub. Co.

17—Even when I thought that this was finished, I had a further idea and added a dog which the manuscript mentioned. I was undecided whether to deliver this drawing or do it over with greater spontaneity. The art director wanted it as it was.

become. You cannot practice too much. If you find yourself going stale or becoming bored, look for a different, fresh approach—and keep on practicing.

I will be unhappy if you go through this experience of ours together as I went through mathematics. Mathematics bored me because it was never presented to me in an interesting way. I have a feeling that my math teacher was not very enthusiastic about arithmetic. But I *am* enthusiastic about making pictures, and if I fail to transmit some of my enthusiasm to you I will be greatly disappointed.

Later I will devote an entire lesson to illustration in "line"—"pen and ink" it is commonly called, except that I do not happen to use a pen and I do not use ink either. This will be a technical description, but you will see that, except for the limitations of the medium, the same general philosophy of picture-making applies. I am sometimes a little saddened when a student asks, "What kind of pen do you use to make a line like that?" This is unimportant compared with his other problems, but I remember when I was in the same stage. I could never find out what kind of pen the great French illustrator, Daniel Vierge, used to make his exquisite line drawings. I thought this knowledge would make it possible for me to duplicate his work. Now I know that with his genius, it could have been an ordinary post office pen.

The test of success

An illustrator must be able to work in a variety of media because he faces many reproduction limitations from time to time. Remember that we are working for *reproduction,* and your illustration is not "finished" until it appears on the printed page of a magazine or newspaper or book, either in the editorial or advertising pages. If it does not look well on the printed page, the illustration has failed, no matter how well your original appeared.

The danger of imitation

I am not opposed to a student patterning his work after that of an artist he admires because imitation is one way of absorbing and developing. I only hope that you *know* the qualities which you admire and that they are important ones rather than superficial ones. In describing my methods, I may unconsciously explain to you the reason for my mannerisms. Then you will see that mannerisms often are the result of limitations, either inherent or imposed.

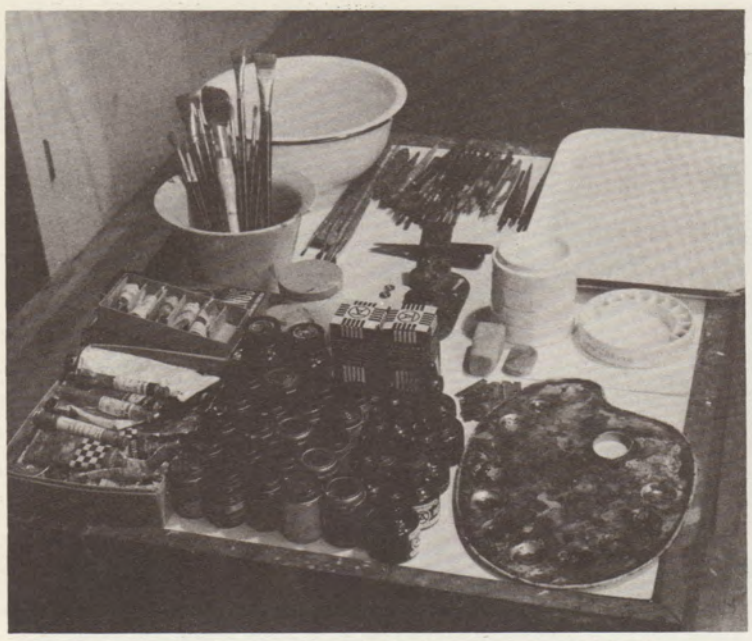
One of my limitations is that I have used very old brushes for many years. They are worn, the points are gone, but they are like old friends and they still respond to a gentle soap and water cleaning. Their shape and condition nevertheless impose certain restrictions upon me. They will make only fat, juicy lines, so I must think in "fat, juicy" terms. When I buy new sable water-color brushes, I am unhappy for a long time and invariably cut the last few hairs off the points with a razor blade.

But you will develop your own eccentricities, so do not absorb mine. I might point out, however, that if you attempted to imitate me, you would limit yourself by my limitations, one of which I have just mentioned.

Robert Fawcett

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

The first step — making the doodle



About once a month my taboret looks like this—a model of neatness

Twenty minutes later, and until the next tidying up, this is more like it

These are my tools

Merely to satisfy your curiosity, I will describe the kind of materials I use. You need not use the same kind but if you would like to try some of those I use, the experience will do you no harm.

My taboret usually is a mess and is cleaned only when so much accumulates that I can find nothing. I have a large water bowl and a variety of brushes of all ages. Mostly they are Windsor & Newton sables, many of them given to me by a colleague who discards them when the sharp points are gone. That is when they just start to become interesting to me.

In addition, I have a variety of flat (oil) sables which I use for water color. Some are new and sharp like a chisel, others are worn and rounded. Finally I have a very useful brush like house painters use to cut around windows—bristle, about one and one-half inches wide.

Also I have a fairly complete collection of colored and black waterproof inks. The black is very important to me and I use it straight or diluted with water. I have a palette of small buttons of dyes which I got from Germany years ago for a few dollars—I think they must have been designed for children. The important colors are gone. There used to be warm and cold blacks which I miss very much. The others I sometimes use to modify the inks.

Then I possess a miscellaneous collection of tempera (opaque) colors of various makes and a complete collection of Casein tempera. The last is a tricky medium. Up to now I use it, and the ordinary tempera, only near the completion of a drawing to accentuate, model or change certain parts that need it.

In addition I have the usual—perhaps more than usual—collection of pencils and crayons—including a box of kid's crayons, stumps, art gum, some butcher's trays for palettes, innumerable paint saucers and much other gear which I seldom seem to use but which adds to the disorder. To the observer it is a messy-looking array, but with long association all of it has become to me a kind of instrument which I know and understand.

Robert Fawcett

The first step — making the doodle

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

I have many big tracing pads around because I use them for all of my preliminary thinking. In a drawer I keep the Whatman Hot-Pressed board on which I usually work. I like a smooth, hard surface and this board has it. For some things I use Strathmore but generally I feel more comfortable on Whatman. For some of my colleagues Whatman is too hard and unresponsive. For me a surface cannot be hard enough.

The above list, then, represents the materials I use. Why I use these materials I will explain as we go along. It is not a conventional, orthodox group by any means and I use the materials very unconventionally.

I urge you not to copy the unconventionalities because I wish sometimes that I were a more orderly person as far as materials are concerned. However, since I have always considered my working procedure a fairly orderly one, I like to believe that the external disorder prevents me from becoming too mannered. I view it all as disorderly order. I know where things are. I am not apologizing, merely describing what is a fact. I have said that I do not believe the materials you use are of prime importance, yet I am unhappy if any of the things I have described as mine are missing. Perhaps we all develop a way of working which in itself results in the collection of materials and *then* the materials do become important to us.

A—Windsor and Newton sables of various ages and in various states of decay. All I ask is that they retain life. When they lose that, they are useless for anything

B—Oil sables which I use for water color in later stages

C—Still larger oil sables which I use when I am "going to town"

D—A stipple brush, sometimes useful for texture, but not used very often

E—The window painter's brush. I use it for large areas when a smooth texture is not very necessary

F—A favorite pencil for doodling. With a 6B lead, I must be direct and limit myself to essentials. It is good on tracing paper

Robert Fawcett

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

The first step — making the doodle

My Method

Germination of the idea — approach to the first doodle — the finished sketch

A sketch represents the germination of a picture idea. I start almost unconsciously—like doodling—with the picture I saw in my mind as I read the manuscript. I let the pencil or pen just wander around putting down random marks. I am not going to show this to anyone. It is just for me. So I wander along idly waiting for something to develop. Then I change the doodling a bit, allowing second thoughts to intrude. There is no erasing. I am not starting a masterpiece.

This page and many another like it will go into the waste basket. All I am doing is ruminating quietly and allowing errant ideas to appear. If things get too messy, I may have to throw everything away and start over. But I don't worry about messiness. The smudges allow the imagination free play and it is good not to let things jell too soon. At this stage any old piece of paper is all right but a piece of Whatman or Strathmore will take more punishment. I draw with any medium at hand that moves freely, is pliable and requires no attention. I keep my mind open but abstract, don't become self-conscious, and think of the story and the incident I still see clearly.

At this stage I am consulting a sort of "inner eye" or subconscious. The decision I reach is going to guide my activities for the next several days, so I make haste slowly.

Finally the marks start to resemble figures and objects and a scene begins to emerge. Perhaps I have gone far enough with this. I see it clearly, so now I may discard it and start a new one. A second image begins to appear. Nothing is clear yet except for what I can read into it, but I begin to see what it all means. I know roughly the size of the picture as I want it to appear in the printed page of the magazine and I try to visualize the picture in its finished setting. I begin to see the whole page dimly, the heading, the type and the part the picture is going to play in the ensemble. Groping about slowly, I may suddenly and even savagely emphasize one point to remember later—a crude figure position or a play of large forms. But I must always keep in mind the scene of the picture, the prominent figures, the less prominent ones and the objects in terms of tone.

The above procedure may be repeated many times in an almost trancelike state, but eventually one picture will emerge—the *right* one. Sometimes—and with me it is nearly always—the first one is the right one. Any conscious attempt at variation seems artificial and less convincing.

At any stage I am likely to pick up anything handy—some colored crayons, an old paint palette—and crudely rub in color, articulating and high-lighting this, setting that back. But all of this must have meaning right from the start. It must all be related to the story and to the chosen situation. This is the germination of a *picture idea.*

Some bottles of colored ink are nearby, so I dip into them and apply some over what by now is a trifle messy but rich approximation of a miniature picture. I don't worry about drawing. That comes later. Now is the time the imagination must have free rein and the longer the idea can be considered in the abstract, the better. Is some opaque color needed? I use it. Too much? Who cares? Ink over it.

This is one of the most exciting moments of production—certainly one of the most

Robert Fawcett

The first step — making the doodle

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

abstractly creative—and it is no time to permit any consideration of the orthodox use of materials to interfere with the imagination. In later stages there will be a lot of hard work and conscious effort, but not now. This is a kind of sensual experience in which we are under nobody's dictation—not even our own. It is largely an unconscious process and quite often more appears than we realize.

This process is one of ruminating with yourself, in fear of nobody's criticism but for your own self-enlightenment. It is a process of obeying instinct largely and allowing nothing to stand in the way of free play of the imagination. When the moment arrives where you have lost the abstract, when you start consciously improving or smoothing out or drawing—that's the time to stop. You have gone as far as possible.

In some of these first doodlings of mine I start with a pencil or pen or brush; scrub in some diluted ink; go to a ruling pen held freely in the hand like a pencil; then to a charcoal stump; then more ink; then colored inks; some opaque water color; then back to the pen again—over and over and over until my imagination sees the finished picture through this haze of mixed media.

Try this yourself many times. Watch pictures grow without knowing how they grow. Keep them very small and do not focus the eye too critically upon what you are doing. You will like some of these—at least you will for a few days, when you will be doing better ones with more meaning. Occasionally I have taken one of these small doodles, about three by five inches, and had it enlarged many times. Then I have used this as a basis for the finished picture, a procedure I will explain in a later lesson.

It is only a particularly happy doodle that can be so treated. Usually you will use the miniature for guidance for what I call the finished sketch. It is truly remarkable how eloquent these little doodlings can be, how full of life and meaning and spontaneity. It is even more remarkable how these very qualities which we captured in the doodle can become lost in the finished drawing unless we are very careful indeed.

Take time out just to doodle. Do not concentrate too much on what comes out. This is sometimes a refreshing experience. Everyone doodles, particularly when seated at the telephone, but their doodles do no more than reveal the character of the doodlers. Let yours be a sensitive investigation of the medium in your hand. Some relaxation is necessary and this can be rewarding as well as relaxing. (I will thank amateur psychiatrists to refrain from using these doodles of mine to analyze me)

Robert Fawcett

26 The first step — making the doodle

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

This doodle and the three following are reproduced in the same size they were drawn

There is a crossed element in the middle of the picture which seems to divide it. This may be useful or it may be a fault. I would test this in a later rendition

Some colleagues will tell me they like my doodles better than my finished work! This will not surprise me. My colleagues have more imagination than most people and doodles allow that imagination to function

This represents the first doodle for an historical picture. The problem was to create an impression of tension as a main character enters a room, an effect you probably have seen produced on the stage many times. Here again I would not employ models in finishing this because the picture already has plenty of interest and I want to feel free to make the figures do whatever I desire.

I would, however, change some things in making the finished picture. The chandelier is centered too much over the corner of the room. I would move it to the right. There is some confusion on the left side which I would have to clarify. But in the main, I see my finished picture rather clearly right here and I could enlarge this to size by using a photostat and start the finished illustration from that point.

I can light the scene dramatically from the windows, and I can silhouette the white figure entering against the black opening of the door, but off center. The other figures merely serve to frame the principal figure and the repetition of back views heightens the drama. The finished picture would have a romantic elegance, plus the tension of arrested movement.

In this picture there will be definitely one focus of interest, the figure entering the room. Everything else in the picture serves to "frame" and amplify this focal point. The other figures would not be treated casually but I would see that none of them conflicted with the white figure. Note that this figure actually is smallest in point of size, but he will be observed first in spite of that.

These are fun to do. Try a lot of them. In this particular instance I seem to have started with the pen line, then used a little ink dilution and the kid's crayons, rubbed in some tone with a dirty charcoal stump, and articulated it in places with opaque white.

Robert Fawcett

The first step — making the doodle

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

Doodling with a ruling pen is an eccentricity of mine. I do not advocate it particularly and I positively refuse to justify the habit

This doodle represents a first idea for a picture dealing with some kind of conflict, perhaps a riot or a street fight. It was drawn loosely with a ruling pen held like a pencil. (Don't ask me why I used the ruling pen—I just like the *feel* of it.) Some tone is roughly indicated, but you will note that it is loose enough and vague enough so I can read meaning into it.

A second rendering of this would articulate the figures and give meaning to what at present are just nervous shapes. But the movement, contrast and angularity would be retained if I decide this first little doodle has any spirit at all.

I would enjoy finishing this and, if I did finish it, I probably would start right in by slowly bringing order out of chaos—but not too much order. It is violent, chaotic subject matter and the drawing must reflect this feeling.

There is certainly present in this doodle an abstract movement which crept in although I do not know just how or why. Any elaboration of this doodle would amplify and utilize this quality.

In finishing this picture, it would be sheer idiocy to use photographs except as a source of fleeting suggestion. I would carry it forward with no outside help until I got stuck. And it is quite likely that at that point I would find myself with a finished illustration.

One great fault in illustration today is the tendency of many artists to use crutches before they have even tested their ability to walk alone. It is the line of least resistance because drawings such as the one above do not sell easily and certainly do not sell themselves. My way of doing illustrations, in the light of the popular demand, probably is an uphill fight.

Robert Fawcett

The first step — making the doodle

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

This indication of title, style of lettering and size may suggest something to the magazine art director, or he may have his own ideas

Note how the violent perspective takes the eye back into the picture. The movement of the edges of the box frames the girl and stops the eye

The design of the entire page is involved in this type of doodle. To me, this kind of drawing is not quite as much fun to make as a rectangular picture. The design does not offer as many possibilities as a rectangular one, but it does demonstrate an ability to cooperate with an art director in solving his problem of page layout which he will appreciate.

The scene seems to have something to do with the theater or the opera, and a relationship is established between the girl in the box and a man down in the orchestra. The point of view is moderately dramatic and permits a delineation of the character of the female figure which always is acceptable. The finished drawing would retain the strong contrast between black and white, and there would be plenty of glitter which would seem desirable in this type of subject.

Here is an example of how easily you can visualize the finished picture by working first in this small size. If I enlarged this sketch to working size in a photostat, I would see just how much of my thinking already had been done. Then it would only be necessary for me to refine the drawing and give more consideration to true values. But the picture is all set.

If I had started by thinking in terms of the characters, and had gone to a photographer with models and a very rough sketch, my imagination would have been imprisoned by the resulting photographs. But with the doodle, I already see interesting things—a pattern of light and shadow in the girl's dress, for example, which I could use to tie together with other patterns to achieve the solidity which is so important. These are some of the things which make illustrating such an exciting experience, and if you pass up such things, you will not know the fun you are missing.

Note the repetition of the cross motifs as opposed to the repetition of the two somber figures, the one inviting, the other reluctant

I had absolutely no story idea in mind when I started this, but now I could almost invent a story for the drawing. The illustrative (story) approach gets in your blood after awhile

This kind of page design employs the illustration to "loosen up" the page. The imagination carries the picture across what actually are type columns. Such a design gives an air of freedom to the page although this is not a particularly exciting example.

Because this is a solemn, poetic subject, any element of excitement is avoided studiously by a calm juxtaposition of simple shapes, creating a mood of serenity. This business of "mood" is most important, and if you keep striving for it, you will never become static and repetitive—a mere technician. Interpreting mood is the most important function of the illustrator and the measure of his stature as an artist. A technician merely sprays the same technique over every subject and remains unmoved by the almost endless varieties of "feeling" which it is possible—and necessary—to inject into his work.

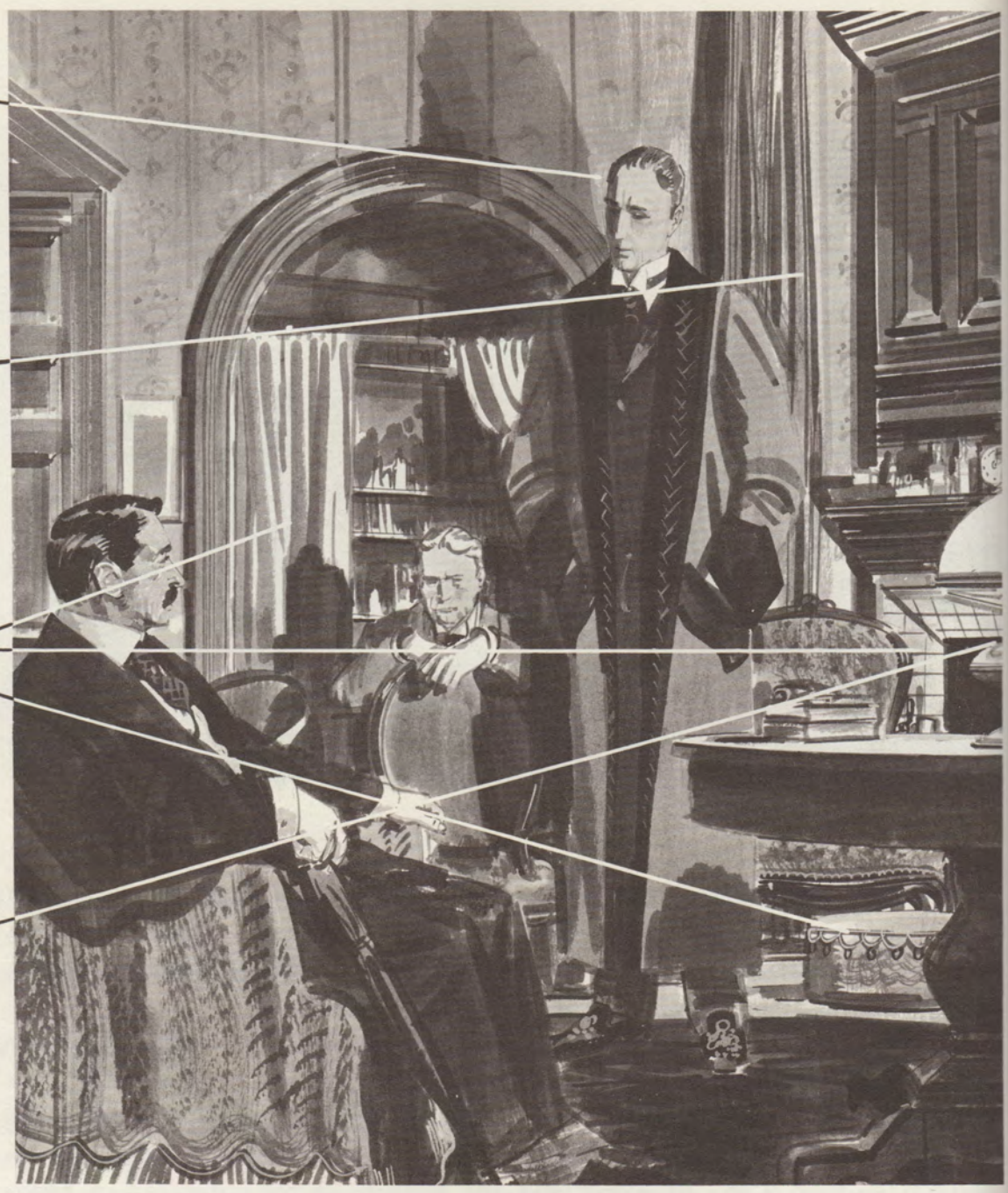
In this type of page layout, the dramatic intensity is lessened in favor of two-dimensional design. So it becomes page decoration, which is very necessary when the story seems to call for it. This treatment requires more "good taste" than the more dynamic, emotional picture. Usually you will find yourself leaning toward one approach or the other, but the competent illustrator is the one who is adaptable and who knows instinctively the answer to each problem, and who has the ability to employ any one of several solutions.

Sometimes it is argued that things such as this involve design, and that drawing is something quite different. This is not so. The ability to draw is the ability to conceive, to see in advance. I know of no way to gain this ability except by drawing constantly until your imagination can project itself into any scene without fear of any technical inability to portray what the mind sees.

Robert Fawcett

The first step — making the doodle

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.



This finished sketch shows only one-half of the drawing and is reproduced a little less than actual size. It begins to capture the flavor of Sherlock Holmes's rooms in Baker Street, London, which I imagine are a bit dull and old-fashioned

Gutter comes about here and will not cut through a figure. The rest of the picture and the beginning of the story are on the right facing page which is not shown

All the interior details are not what we might choose for our own home, but they are in the bad taste of the period

This lamp is important. All lighting in the room must be from this source. By projecting yourself into the scene, you can figure all this out logically enough

The finished sketch

What I call the finished sketch is slightly less imaginative in nature. I usually make it the same size it eventually will be in the magazine. If the drawing extends across the "gutter"—where left and right pages meet—I indicate this point so that no important figure or object will be cut in half in reproduction. It is also good not to divide the action at this point for it is a barrier the reader must hurdle.

Using the doodle for guidance, I might execute a more literal rendering of the scene in the new size. Sometimes I require reference material about the appearance of objects, costumes, etc., at this point but usually that is left until later. This sketch may be shown to an art director or editor so I try to dress it up a bit by improving the drawing, indicating details and faces and making what were at first abstract shapes into forms which have more meaning.

So this finished sketch becomes the second stage in realization. It is still freely rendered for it will not be reproduced, and the possibilities of the unexpected and accidental are yet very much present. Now I try to find out what my final problems will be—what references I will need, what model studies or photographs—and I feel a little happier at the thought that the idea has germinated.

Perhaps I indicated roughly how I would like the page to appear, showing the title and type disposition in relation to the picture. Sometimes this is followed by the magazine but, sadly, more often not. But primarily now I see the picture and I anticipate its problems. With an assurance gained by following a tried and proven method, I know—or at least hope—that the finished picture will be even better and more eloquent than the sketch. Some of the qualities of the sketch I will retain. I note the absence of other qualities which must be incorporated in the finished product. All in all, it's a pretty nice feeling!

This is an original sketch, slightly more than a doodle. I drew with a pen, then washed in tone and color. It seemed to have the flavor I sought, so I had it photostated and enlarged from 10 to about 30 inches wide and started my finish (below) from the photostat

This drawing went along rather easily because the sketch was such a complete one. You will note that there are only a few changes from the original idea. Essentially it is the same picture but done in greater detail and with greater refinement of drawing

Here is an actual size detail of one of my preliminary tracings, an important step which is described in the following section.

How I make a picture

by R.F. ROBERT FAWCETT

lesson 2

MEMBER OF THE FACULTY OF

Institute of Commercial Art, *Inc.*

Westport, Connecticut

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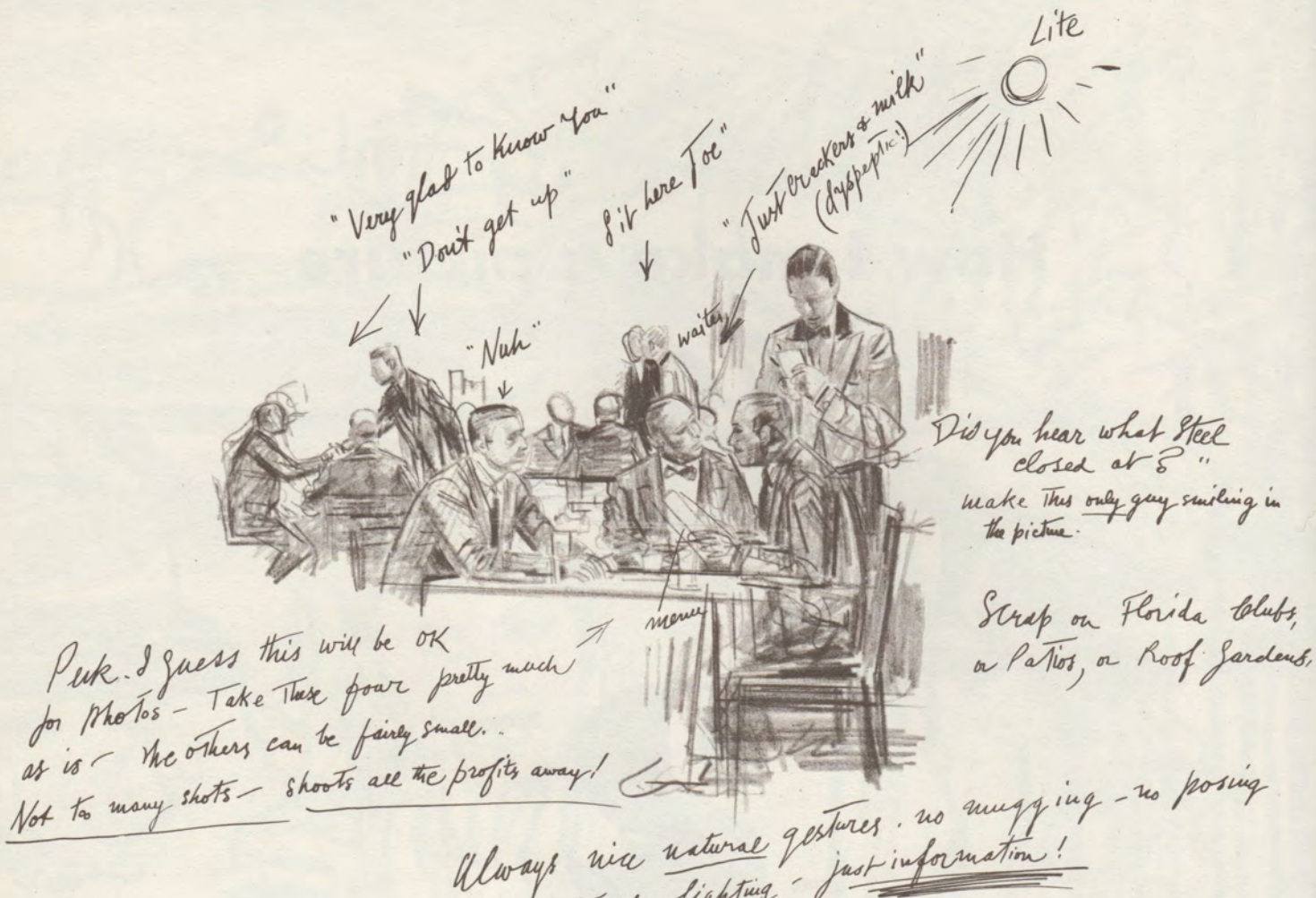
Lite
"Very glad to know you"
"Don't get up"
"Nuh"
waiter
menu
"Just crackers & milk" (dyspeptic)
Did you hear what Steel closed at?"
make this only guy smiling in the picture.
Strap on Florida clubs, or Patios, or Roof Gardens.
Peek. I guess this will be OK for photos - Take these four pretty much as is - the others can be fairly small. Not too many shots - shoots all the profits away!
always nice natural gestures. no mugging - no posing simple lighting - just information!
I have now seen the Imperial Layout!

The rough diagram above shows the disposition of figures for an advertising drawing. The sketch was made so someone else could take the necessary, documentary photographs for me. I have indicated the figures and gestures roughly and have invented some probable dialogue going on to aid the photographer. The invention of dialogue is a handy illustrator's device. By doing this the photographer can visualize the expressions, not only of the faces, but of the whole figure as well. The sun in the upper right indicates where I want the chief source of light to come from. Every picture he shoots must have the same lighting if the scene is to be reasonably realistic, as an advertising drawing must be. To get this realism, photographic documentation is indicated. The other scribbling has to do with making my needs more apparent. In this sketch I am not trying to draw accurately, I merely indicate "placing" and the scene.

Beginning the "Finished" Drawing

Laying it out on tracing paper

My procedure in beginning the finished drawing is not followed by most of my colleagues. If it is a complicated illustration, I spend at least one day working it out in the finished size on a large paper tracing pad.

I have done the small sketch which suggests how the finished illustration will look but it is only a very vague and miniature approximation. Nothing has been worked out in detail; figures are only indicated; the interior or exterior scene still lacks authenticity. The real work still must be done.

First I enlarge what I have done up to working size. I have no rigid rule about this size, but "one half up" (half again as large as the drawing finally will appear) seems large enough to permit drawing freely and also to incorporate details which will not be lost entirely when the size is later reduced in reproduction. The

subject matter largely determines this working size.

There are many mechanical ways to make this enlargement but I have never had the patience to master any of them. The pantograph is one, the Camera Lucida is another, and there are machines which project the enlarged image onto a drawing or painting surface where it can be traced with a pencil. All these devices are time-savers but, without wishing to seem old-fashioned, I am suspicious of the intrusion of mechanical gadgets into what is *not* to be a mechanical operation.

To my mind, the camera and other mechanical devices have made it possible for many people to become illustrators of a sort — sometimes very successful ones — but they have also resulted in stifling imagination and reducing the artistic level of illustration to a dangerous mediocrity. The more such devices are used by the artist, the less the incentive or necessity for developing the "personal" viewpoint. This makes of illustration less an art and more a "product" — a piece of saleable merchandise. To me, this is the great danger today and I believe it is a short-sighted policy for a student thus to invite competition in a field already filled with formidable technicians.

It can be argued that this enlargement of the sketch to finished drawing size is a mechanical operation, and the easier it can be done the better. But I maintain that each stage of procedure should permit the intrusion of new ideas, reconsideration, second thoughts. Making the enlargement mechanically eliminates the chance to make changes or improvements at one stage, and I contend that not even one stage should be eliminated.

Photostat enlargement

Sometimes a small sketch seems to me to be so complete that, if I am pressed for time, I have a photostat made to enlarge it to working size and start from there. I often have found this method very useful — but the sketch *must* be a good one in the first place. My normal procedure, however, is to lay out the approximate size I desire on a tracing pad and copy the sketch in a general way. I use my eye alone to judge the changes in proportion until I have an approximation of the picture in the new size. This is all that the enlarged photostat will accomplish for me, except that it is sometimes reassuring to see the drawing I must make, even in a vague, incomplete state. It is something concrete with which to start.

Research

Now comes documentation. Perhaps the scene contains several figures in a setting. Up to this point I have given little thought to the actual form the figures and setting will take. Now I must consult all the authorities I can find, so that everything I put into the picture will be authentic, because authenticity in an illustration is important. If this is a period story, I must search for pictures, photographs and old prints to absorb what has been portrayed before in a similar situation or setting.

No artist can retain in his mind all the authentic details of any period. If he tries to do so, he soon will start repeating himself and end by developing a deadly formula. I have drawn scenes of colonial America many times but each time I start to do a new one I consult new authorities just to avoid this danger — and it is surprising how much new data I discover each time. I believe I could very easily draw a colonial scene without this research but I soon would start using cliches — my own perhaps, but still cliches — and my work would begin to suffer.

Here's another important by-product of this research. In doing it I unconsciously absorb facts which help to create the "mood" for the drawing. If it is a colonial picture I am doing, I observe a sort of stiffness in setting or in figure postures while examining contemporary prints. This stiffness I remember, and it finds its way into *my* picture and thus helps to create the "mood" of the period although I may not quite know why. It is impossible to look at Brady photographs of the Civil War without being influenced by the character and gestures which say "Civil War."

This quality would be lost if I relied on models, dressed them in approximations of Civil War costumes

Robert Fawcett

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and then made drawings or photographs and worked from them. The result would look like just what it was — models dressed in costumes — and a synthetic artificiality would replace the authenticity which all period illustration should have. This is less true of contemporary scenes peopled with figures in current dress and in this case the photograph can serve a useful purpose if its use is not abused.

But now to return to my illustration. I am starting to work it out on tracing paper, an extremely interesting and important stage of development. If it is a period picture, I consult all the books on the subject on my own shelves, and then go to the Public Library for more information. If I cannot take away with me the pictures I find at the library, I make notes on a pad about pertinent things — a lamp I like, a bit of furniture that fits in well, a piece of construction that conveys a flavor I need. All of this I do with the original sketch in mind, knowing where the data I am collecting will fit.

Then I may make studies or photographs of the figures, being careful of posture, action and lighting, deciding which figures are to be important and which are subordinate. The assembling of data is not easy. Sometimes it requires several days but they are days well spent. There is much more to illustration than drawing, and all this preliminary work is necessary and extremely valuable. I know of no way to avoid doing it except perhaps to have someone do it for me. But this does not always work because how can someone else anticipate what I will find useful?

By maintaining an open mind, I find that this research often results in a modification of my original idea. Perhaps I find an interior with more possibilities than the one I had planned, permitting a more interesting disposition of the people and lighting. My mind being open, I accept this change as an improvement. Or while thumbing through a news magazine I see a character who seems to fit a character in my story. So I tear it out for reference. Perhaps across from me on the bus sits someone who fits another pertinent character. I make mental notes of facial and structural characteristics.

It is amazing how frequently all this happens during the period of story gestation. The mind and eye seem doubly receptive to useful material at this time.

Photographs

Nearly all illustrators now make photographs of models in the position desired in their illustration and work from these photographs. This practice virtually has been forced on illustrators for two reasons: the demand for realism and the high cost of models. There is also another advantage. If photographic lights are used with intelligence and discretion, the photograph may suggest an interest in lighting which most artists could never invent.

I use photographs about half the time and I am happy when people cannot detect whether or not I have used them. Of my own drawings, those which I like best are done entirely without models, but this is possible only when so much else is in the picture — so much atmosphere, mood and incident — that the absence of complete naturalness in the characters is not missed — in fact its presence would be wrong.

Through long experience, I have come to know what I want in a figure, and whether I invent it by slowly working it out, or whether I study a photograph I have taken, the result is about the same. I place much importance on *using* the photograph rather than allowing the photograph to use me. I use it as I would a model, taking only what is useful, distilling it to its essence and discarding the rest.

I am not interested in demonstrating how cleverly I can render in paint something I see in front of me. I hope you will avoid that too. The "life" of a pose is something to feel, something I felt as I read the story. If some pose eludes me completely, I usually go to the photographer and do the posing myself, because no model can act the part quite the way I see it.

But every photograph has "dead" areas which contribute nothing to the action or to the finished picture. I try to keep "dead" areas out of a picture and it is well to do the same in using a photograph. If one is a draftsman, it is difficult to *invent* a figure that is not boiled

down to its essentials, one in which each line counts. In using a photograph, you must know when you have ended "distilling" and when you are just copying it mechanically.

This business of illustrating for publications is so difficult that ordinarily I would say you are justified in using anything — literally anything — to make it less difficult. But I would like to add one statement. The end must justify the means. When I see illustrations in which I detect nothing except the accurate rendering of a group of model photographs — often with the aid of the enlarging and reflecting machines I have mentioned — then I maintain the end does *not* justify the means because the result usually is mediocre and without character.

As I proceed, I begin to see the original sketch as an actual scene. My imagination starts with that early scribble and, immediately, all the possibilities of the pictures are multiplied. I can start to assemble all of my material on the large tracing paper.

The first moves are tentative. This fits here. That fits there. A window silhouettes this figure. I will half cover that subordinate figure with some object — never mind what. I know I need an object of a certain shape for this purpose and can decide later what it will be. Here are some lines which run out of the picture, detracting from the action. So I change them. Then I consider where other pertinent material I have assembled can be placed to best advantage.

As yet I do not draw too carefully. I remain tentative. Now I try the placing and disposition of some of the areas, for I am beginning to "know" the picture. I have drawn the extreme limits of the picture area and I know where it finally will fit on the magazine page. The limits are important. I use them to frame the incident.

Sometimes, in the excitement of this stage, I pick up a brush and, with black ink, indicate something of importance to be done later. Or, with a large brush, I may paint in a gray area I want to retain in the finished picture. This may cause the tracing paper to buckle but I can't help that. It is not important. I work at first with a soft pencil, freely, avoiding detail. I just want to remember where the detail will go. I want to create "depth," so I indicate some figures very large in the foreground — others quite small in the background. I keep thinking *into* the picture as well as across it. During this period I try not to allow the picture to "jell" or become static at any point. Fat, coarse lines indicate a figure and arrows indicate source of light.

I have chosen the caption which will accompany the picture. I keep this caption constantly in mind as I do the whole scene the manuscript described — the scene I am picturing.

My tracing can, and does, become an awful mess, but I permit this. I use a large charcoal stump to indicate tone, or I rub the drawing with my fingers. No one will see this but me and at the moment I am not looking at it critically. I am using this device to allow my mind to wander freely and anticipate all the factors which I must consider carefully later, all the little problems I must not forget are going to appear before the painting is done.

Some details which might develop into problems also can be avoided at this stage. Perhaps I can select a dark area to silhouette what will be an important figure. If so, this is *one* problem I will not have — a light against a light! Perhaps I may change my mind and depart quite radically from the original thumbnail sketch. No matter — it has served its purpose.

I never erase anything at this stage — I always keep adding. I draw over and over, permitting the sketch to become as confused as it will. Then I bring whatever semblance of order out of it that I can. Nothing of importance is arrived at neatly. However, in my mind, the picture is beginning to become orderly and that is the important thing. I start to see the possibilities more vividly and in more detail. This has nothing to do with the seeming confusion on the pad in front of me. This is the second process in "realizing the picture." Everything begins to have more meaning. But I will remember many things which are not visible now when I overtrace, which is the next and more precise step in these preliminaries.

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Solving Drawing Problems — Example 1

These are the three pictures the photographer got by following my rough sketch. They give me plenty of information and variety and allow for changes in composition. I already see some things I will retain and some other things I will reject. Only one of the three models is a professional — the older man. Intelligent friends are usually much better for this kind of thing. They haven't been spoiled by acquiring model's habits of mugging and grinning under all circumstances. In the picture of the two men greeting each other, I would have liked to see their hands. They could have been shown on either side of the obscuring head. It is not too important, however, as the sketch indicates that this group will be very small anyway.

This is the first roughing in of the final draft on tracing paper. With my original scribble in mind, and the photographs to refer to, I use the original agency layout (not shown) to see how much space I have. It is a problem in composition and I must get the most into the least space without overcrowding It is practicing spatial economy. Figures are indicated more as spaces than figures. When this is correct, the next phase will be simple. This sketch was done with pencil on tracing paper, roughly twice the reproduction size.

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Here is the second and final drawing which was traced on the illustration board. You can see from this drawing that nothing is left to chance. Now, everything is drawn quite carefully so I won't be surprised later on. Still, I don't do much more than indicate the essential character lines. I see that figures don't overlap awkwardly, that everything fits into a nice spatial pattern, that the whole thing makes sense as a scene. It is the kind of scene we have all witnessed a hundred times but the memory of subtle gestures of men doing nothing but preparing to order a meal, is important. I think that this more than any other thing defines the "illustrative" quality — the remembrance of the right gesture, the observation of the commonplace.

This is the line rendering done with ink and brush. The final picture was in full color, but this is as far as we need to show its progress at this time. Using the photographs wherever necessary and keeping a nice rhythmic feeling in the rendering. I can draw with relative freedom knowing everything is in its place. In spots I have diluted the ink to give a gray tone, but on the whole this is mainly a black and white drawing. Since the spatial design was all set before I started I had only these things to concern me: a crisp rendering, the indication of individual characters, the light source and a nice over-all decorative spotting. This is the way my drawings look before I start with tone and color. And I already know what my tonal and color pattern will be because I have been working it out in my mind as I progressed.

Example 2

Here is another example of my initial steps in making a drawing. This one, however, is for a story illustration. I needed some documentation for a couple of figures in the illustration and this scribble is the diagram of what I need. It will guide my colleague who will take the photographs. He posed for the figure himself (see opposite page). You will notice that this is a very rough scribble. It is purposely so, but the final picture I am going to paint is already firmly in mind. It is a scene in which I take a position down by the fireplace and listen to the dialogue between two characters. The story indicates a cozy, fire-lit room and I want to see how the fire light will fall on the two figures. This is the kind of situation in which photography can be of legitimate use. To be able to visualize the character and draw him is one thing, to draw him with the fire light playing on his face is quite another. The scribbled notations are further instructions for the photographer and are all part of evoking the picture I have in my mind.

This is the picture of a friend posing for the cockney character indicated above. You can see that it hasn't the character at all but it does contain some useful information —particularly, it shows how the light strikes the face. An artist more in love with photography than I am would have searched until he found the exact character he wanted and would have photographed the character himself. He would then have a picture to work from that left little to the imagination. I prefer to treat photographic research more casually, even allowing others to take the photo for me, because I am happier if I don't let too much actuality interfere with my mental concept of a picture. I draw principally from my imagination with an occasional glance at a photograph or model to document the interesting facts.

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The final tracing is ready for transferring to the finished paper. You will notice that I have stuck closely to my original conception of the foreground figure and have taken very little, actually, from the photo. Other things in the scene are indicated with the same "pattern" effect in mind. Apparently, I am having difficulty deciding on the exact placement of the ceiling fixture. Only well developed taste can decide where it will eventually be put. It is an important decision and it must be right. "Just anywhere" is not the answer. Taste, resulting from many years experience, will dictate the answers to problems like this one. Each solution is different yet correct for each particular problem.

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Second Tracing

When this first rough on tracing paper has progressed as far as I think it can, I tear it off the pad, slip it under the next sheet and prepare to retrace it. If the drawing is very large, I sometimes tape two pieces of paper together, in which event I would do the same thing before retracing. Again I lay out the correct size and start to *re-evaluate* the drawing underneath. This is still not a mechanical procedure because I do *not* tack both sheets down, and merely trace, more neatly, what I see.

There may be many things which I desire to retain very much as I have them. These I draw, although still making changes and refinements which occur to me as I proceed. Then comes a time when a change in the position of a figure or object seems to offer possibilities for improvement. So I move the lower paper around until the figure or object is in the new position and I can see if it is or is not better. Or a figure may appear to have a "dead" area, so I try moving it partly behind another one, thus permitting the "live part" of the figure to show, but hiding the part which is less expressive. By doing this, the dead part no longer takes up valuable space in the picture area.

I am constantly surprised by how small and inadequate this picture area really is, and a developed sense of spatial relationships will not permit me to waste any of it. I do not mean that the entire picture should be crowded with detail. There will be points of interest where this happens, but these areas will be offset by others where not much occurs. It is this juxtaposition of the "busy" and the "restful" areas which eventually will give the picture life and interest.

I retrace, I group more tightly where this seems desirable and loosen up elsewhere. I think less of what the parts actually are — figures, buildings, objects — than of the space they occupy. Although at this stage I correct the drawing as much as I can, it is still very much a problem of relating spaces — like manipulating a jig-saw puzzle.

You must begin to see that this is a fairly orderly process. It is, in fact, a method of arriving at order through a creative chaos. Later I loosen up again, but right now I want to feel the confidence of things in their proper places. I want to arrive at a line pattern which I know will also work as a tone and color pattern, and my original little sketch tells me it will. Too much refinement in drawing at this stage will be difficult to retain for tracing in the finished picture, so a good outlined shape indicating a head position is worth more just now than carefully worked out features.

Perhaps you can imagine the feeling of a man making a stained glass window when his lead pattern finally is set, based on the study he has made of the whole project. Imagine the confidence with which he fits one small segment, certain that it is right and will take its harmonious place in the whole complicated pattern when the window is completed. Now you have an idea of the feeling of security I seek in planning an illustration in this way.

With this in mind, I complete the second tracing. It has changed considerably from the first one. It makes more sense and it has more order. When I complete this stage I know my picture very well. I foresee most of the problems and I am already anticipating details of drawing, tone relationships and color. In addition to a feeling of keen anticipation, I now have also a feeling of relaxed confidence.

When the second tracing is finished, I blacken the back with a soft pencil, rub it smooth with a charcoal stump and tack it firmly to the illustration board or other surface on which I expect to work. Then I carefully trace down everything I have done with a hard 3H pencil, making sure that a good impression is coming through. Even while doing this, I change things as I go along, emphasizing and exaggerating forms and shapes so that in the end they will retain all the force with which I see them now. If I am not careful there will be a tendency for things to become anemic or to lose clarity in this refining process, so I compensate for this by exaggeration now.

Now let us see what I have accomplished. At present, I "know" my problem rather intimately. I have been over it several times. I have given it much thought and I am fairly confident of its completion. The illustration board now has a traced line distillation of my thinking and feeling of the last couple of days or more. Otherwise its surface is pristine.

Except for the first horrible moment when I start to mar that surface with a fat brush line, I am all set. Even that moment is not too difficult to contemplate because I have trained myself to anticipate, always to look ahead, never at what is before me. With that attitude I am now ready to go on to the next stage.

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A change in composition

Here are two preparatory tracings which demonstrate another phase of the useful tracing method. The situation shown involves two men conversing surreptitiously in a park — a spy situation. I am going to base the picture on the two figures — one sitting tense and straight, the other relaxed and talking sotto voce. Inasmuch as these figures are the main elements in the design, their placement and attitude is very important. In the first sketch (top) I felt there was too much distance between them — the idea of conspiracy did not get over. By shifting one tracing under the other I was able to see a much better relationship between the two figures which resulted in the second drawing. The locale is a London park during the war. Luckily, I had been to London parks during the war and I could draw on first hand observation, which included the figure of the Cockney attendant. The humorous twist I later gave this character was not injurious. Spy stories can become oppresively serious and occasionally one is forced to introduce a touch of comedy whether the manuscript calls for it or not. I think this is a legitimate liberty an illustrator can take so long as the over-all spirit is not misrepresented.

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A Practical Demonstration

1 Here is a prize fight scene. On my drawing board at the left you see the original sketch; the large photostat of the sketch is on the tracing pad. These sketches show how I start a preparatory design for the finished drawing. This sketch, however, did not entirely please me. There seems to be a vacant space in the center and the fighter on the right who is receiving the blow is not sufficiently off balance to tell the story. I want to emphasize that the picure did not satisfy me even though it had received the O.K. of the magazine art editor. The process of tracing and retracing it is my way of designing the picture more to my liking.

2 This is the first tracing. I have moved the photostat underneath the tracing so you can see both of them. There is more action in this version but still not enough. The photostat is constantly being moved around so I can see alternative arrangements. In this particular case it happens to be the problem of getting more action, but in other cases the problem might be something else entirely. Don't become bored with my constant reiteration of this method of preliminary designing. I have found it to be of immense value and it has permitted me to do very complicated pictures without losing control of them. As a student you may quickly lose patience with this preliminary work and be unable to wait to start using your paints and brushes. But unless you know what you are about, those paints and brushes are going to get you into an awful mess.

3 Here is still another tracing. The figure begins to look as though he were really receiving a blow. There is not much to say about this. You see what the process is and I hope you see the reason for using it. I have had a different thought about the disposition of the ropes of the ring. They are now closer and therefore higher. This allows me to make the ringside characters larger; it was a space consideration. The space we have to work with always seems small and, to the lively imagination, there is a lot to put into it to keep the picture from being just a decoration. Most people like to look into pictures to see things that were not apparent at first glance. An organized picture will invite this, but a disorganized picture will repel further investigation.

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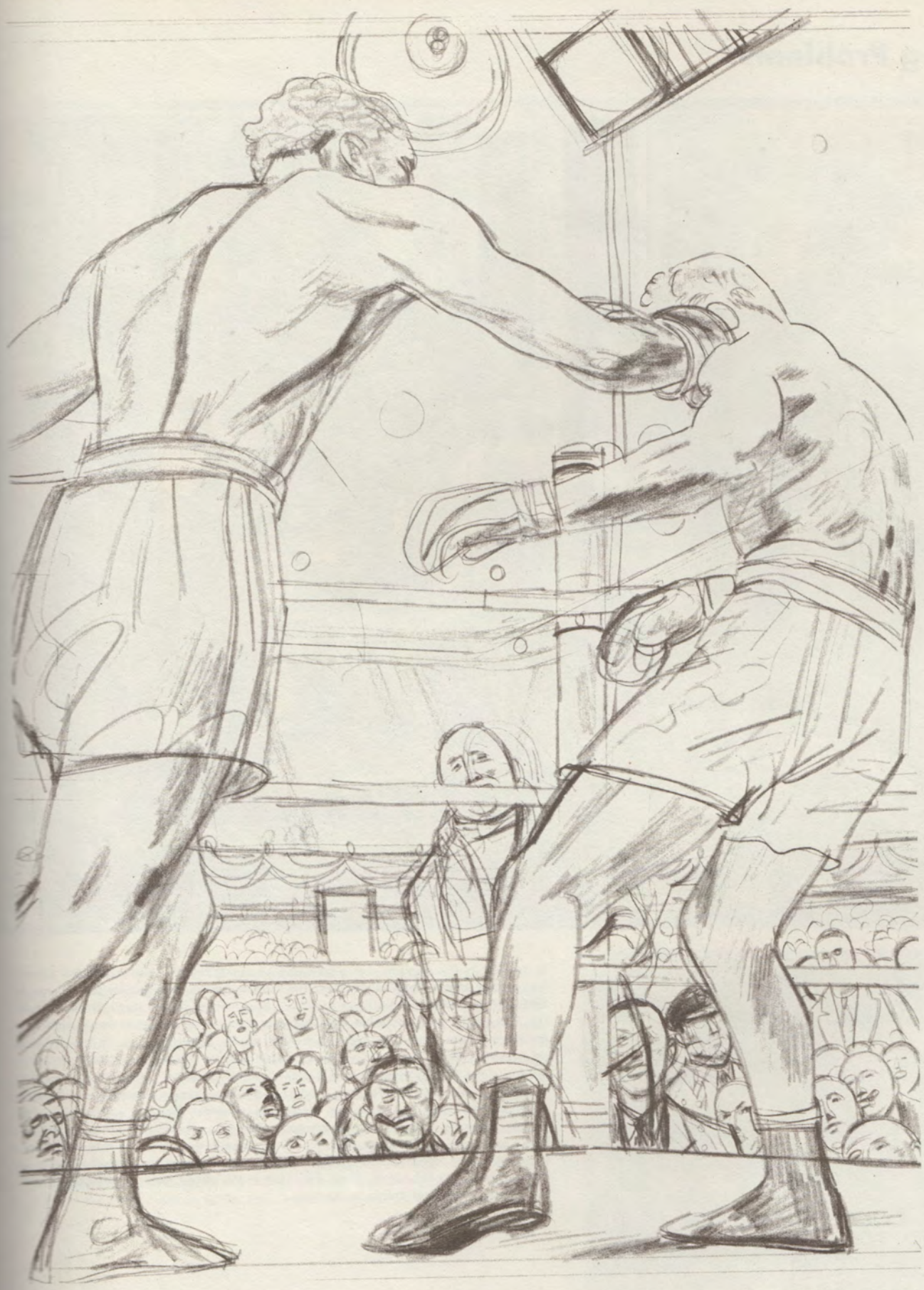

4 This is the final tracing and it includes a suggestion of a ringside audience. The placing of the lights and the loudspeaker above, as in everything else, is not haphazard. It all has to do with the design of the picture. This is where you start designing even though much of it will be unseen after the final rendering. You see, there is no such thing as "learning" composition. You *feel* composition. It is a fluid thing for which there are no rules; it is an inner feeling that things are right or that they are wrong. In a case like this background crowd, I will not try to trace on the board more than a suggestion of shapes. In regarding these shapes later the brush will develop whatever individual characters I want to appear. Any attempt to develop them now in detail and retain them in the tracing would result in stiffness and lack of spontaneity.

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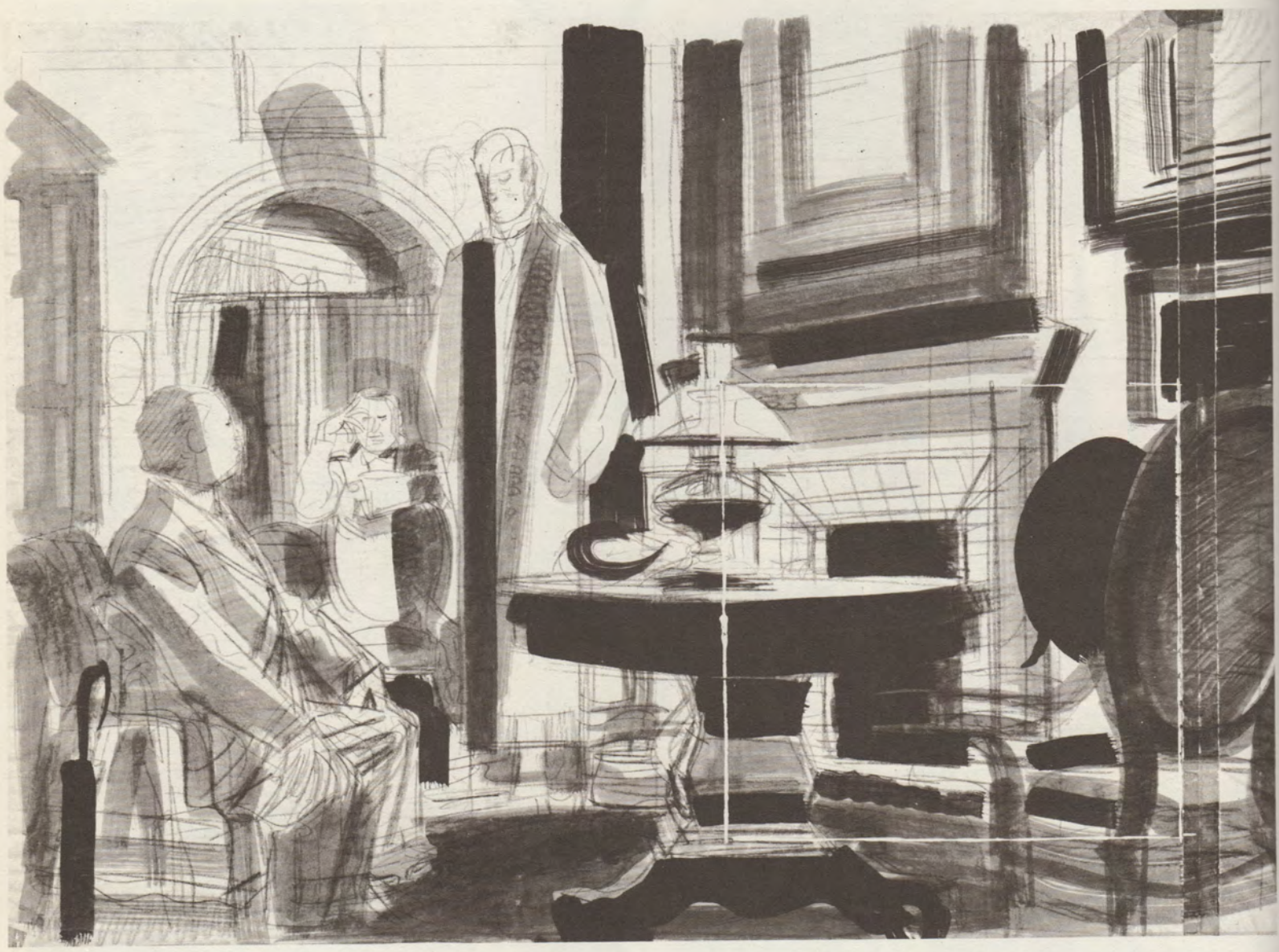
More Drawing Problems



At the left is the original sketch (see also Lesson 1) for the illustration of a Conan Doyle story about Sherlock Holmes. The tracing above is a first large size rough draft. It is drawn loosely with pencil and then patterned with a large flat brush and ink. The whole thing probably took less than an hour to do but it was valuable to me when I over traced for the final tracing on the opposite page. In the sketch I submitted to the magazine I used no models for the two seated figures. In this I used models. The figure of Holmes I drew from imagination. I did this because the character of Sherlock Holmes is so well known it has become a symbol and I didn't want to risk losing this character by having a model limit my imagination. For Holmes, however, I did consult photographs of stage productions to achieve accuracy in his attire and environment. The white lines indicate the area probably to be used for type. I will complete the whole drawing but compose the picture so that if objects are cut by this space, it will not result in the picture being dismembered, but will form a decorative frame to the type.

Robert Fawcett

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Here is the final tracing. In it I have gone into some detail, again leaving nothing to chance. Visualizing Holmes' Baker Street rooms was not difficult for I have been in many similar flats in London. I imagined that it was decorated in bad taste in accordance with the standards of that time. It was probably dingy, cramped and disorderly. The problem was to capture this atmosphere and at the same time not make it appear too repulsive. The oil lamp on the table casts a light which helps create a certain warmth and hominess despite the actual ugliness of the interior. The white lines indicate "bleed." The inner line is the final edge as it will appear in the magazine. By comparing this drawing with the small cut of the finished one below, you can see that I made several changes toward the end — mainly the shape of the back of the sofa on the right. Since I am constantly preoccupied with pattern, these things are important to me, though there are no set rules that dictate that one shape is better than another. It is a matter of taste, and simply because I had an oval shape indicated right up to the end, it did not mean I could not change it.

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16 The stage nobody sees

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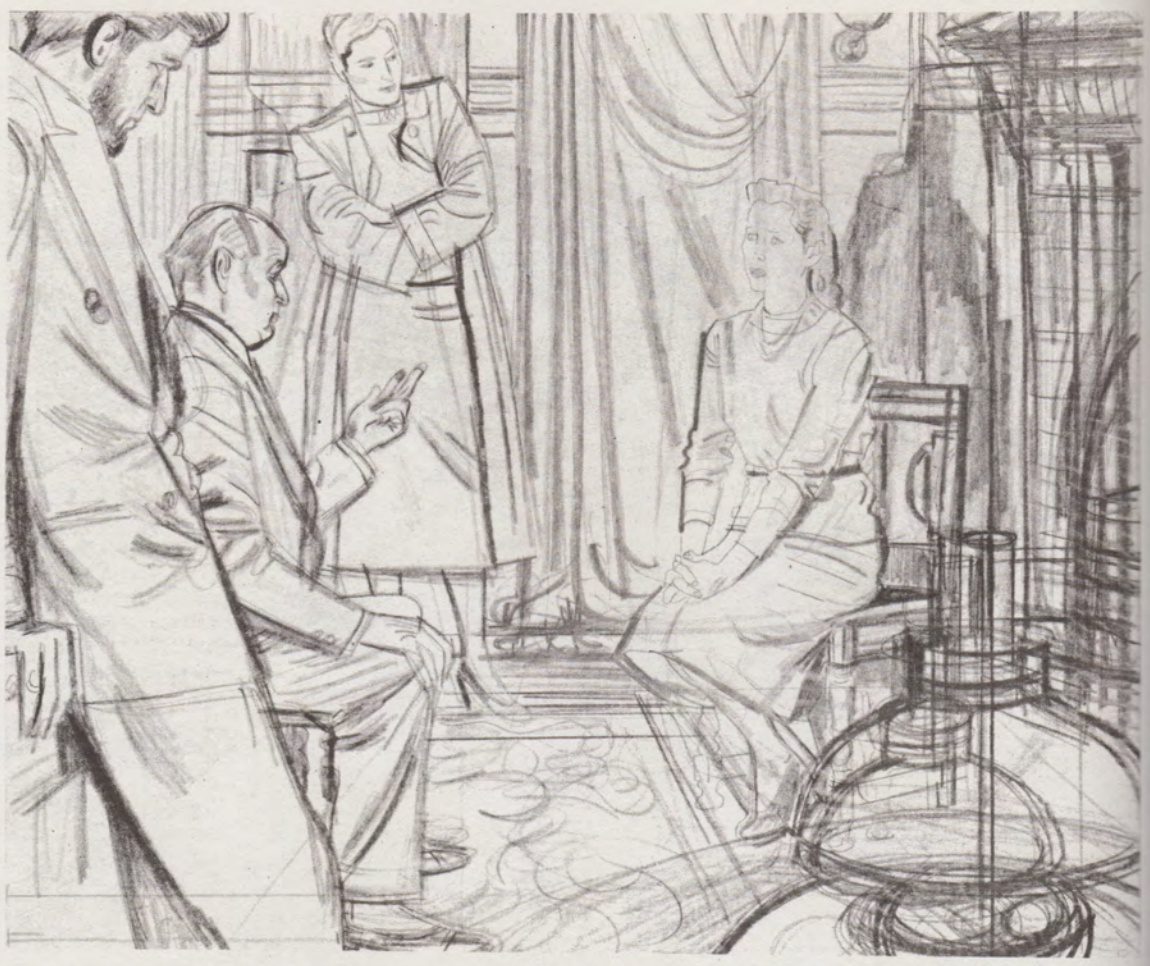

1. This is a simple demonstration of one more use of the tracing method. Here is a finished tracing for an illustration.

2. This is one stage of rendering. I have made some changes in the lower right hand corner but I am not satisfied with the chair the girl is sitting on. The chair itself doesn't bother me; it is the *shape* of the chair. I want to connect the two blackout curtains in the background and so visually support the girl more as she faces her inquisitors.

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The stage nobody sees

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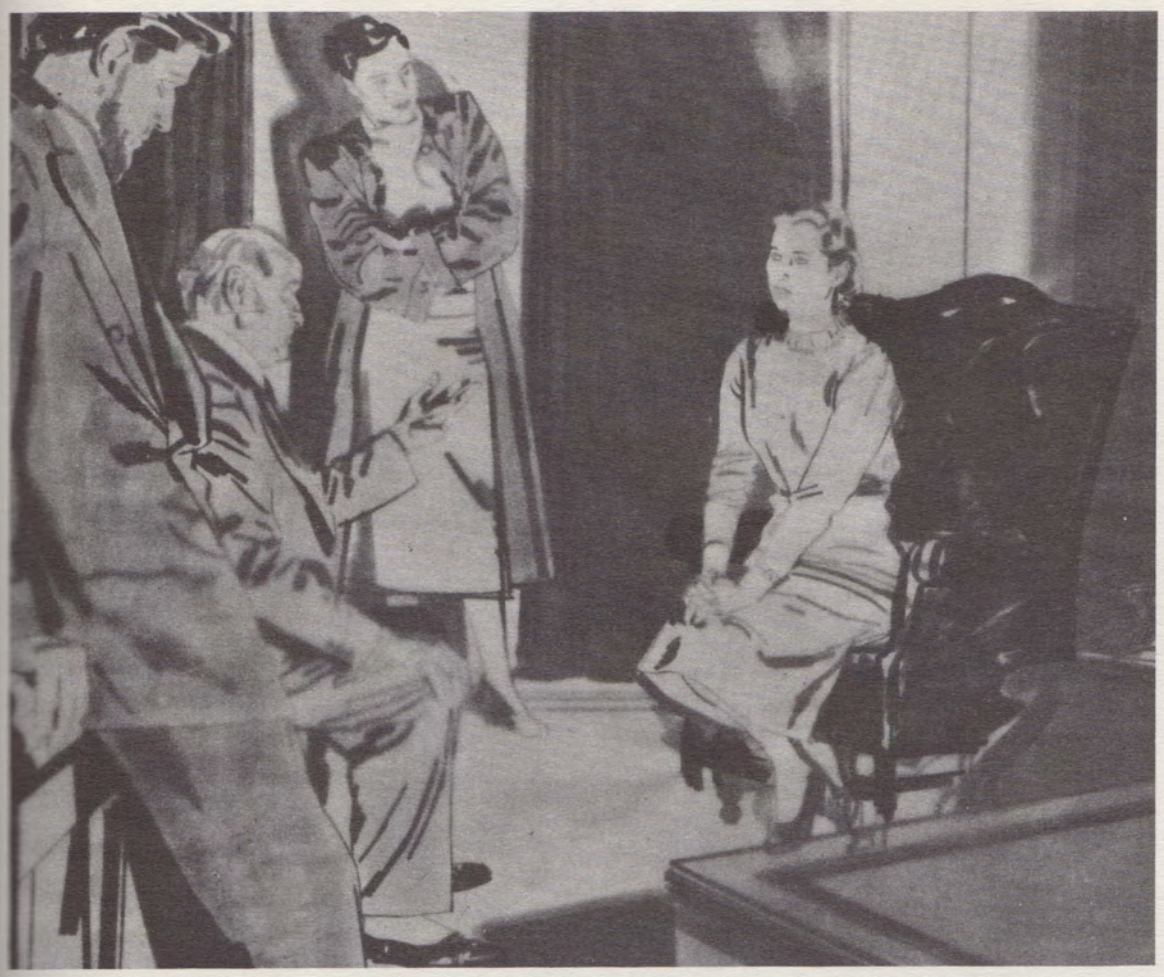
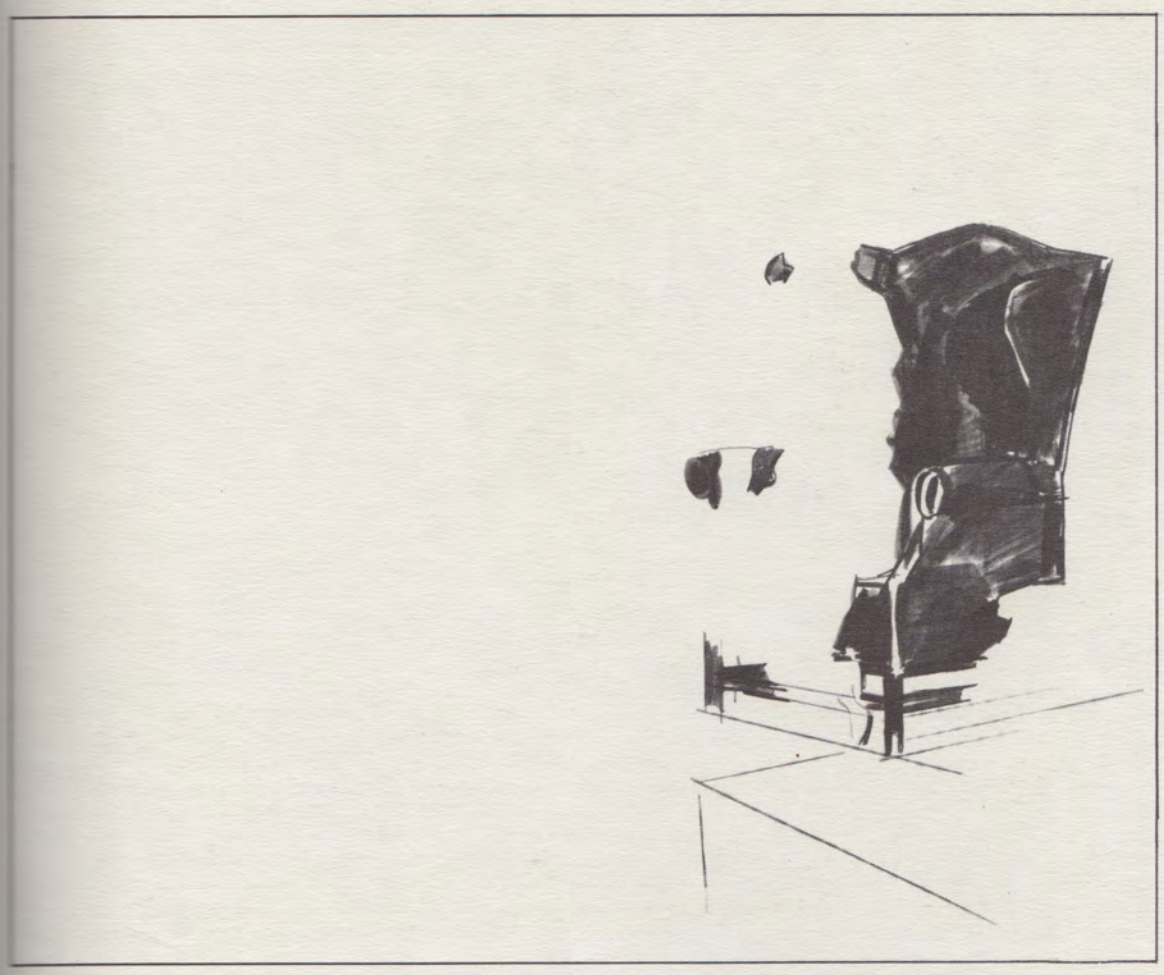


3. I have laid a tracing sheet over the drawing and, with brush and ink, roughly indicated a chair which will do what I want compositionally.



4. Now I simply blacken the back of the tracing paper with a soft pencil and transfer the new chair to the drawing. This is the tracing.

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18 The stage nobody sees

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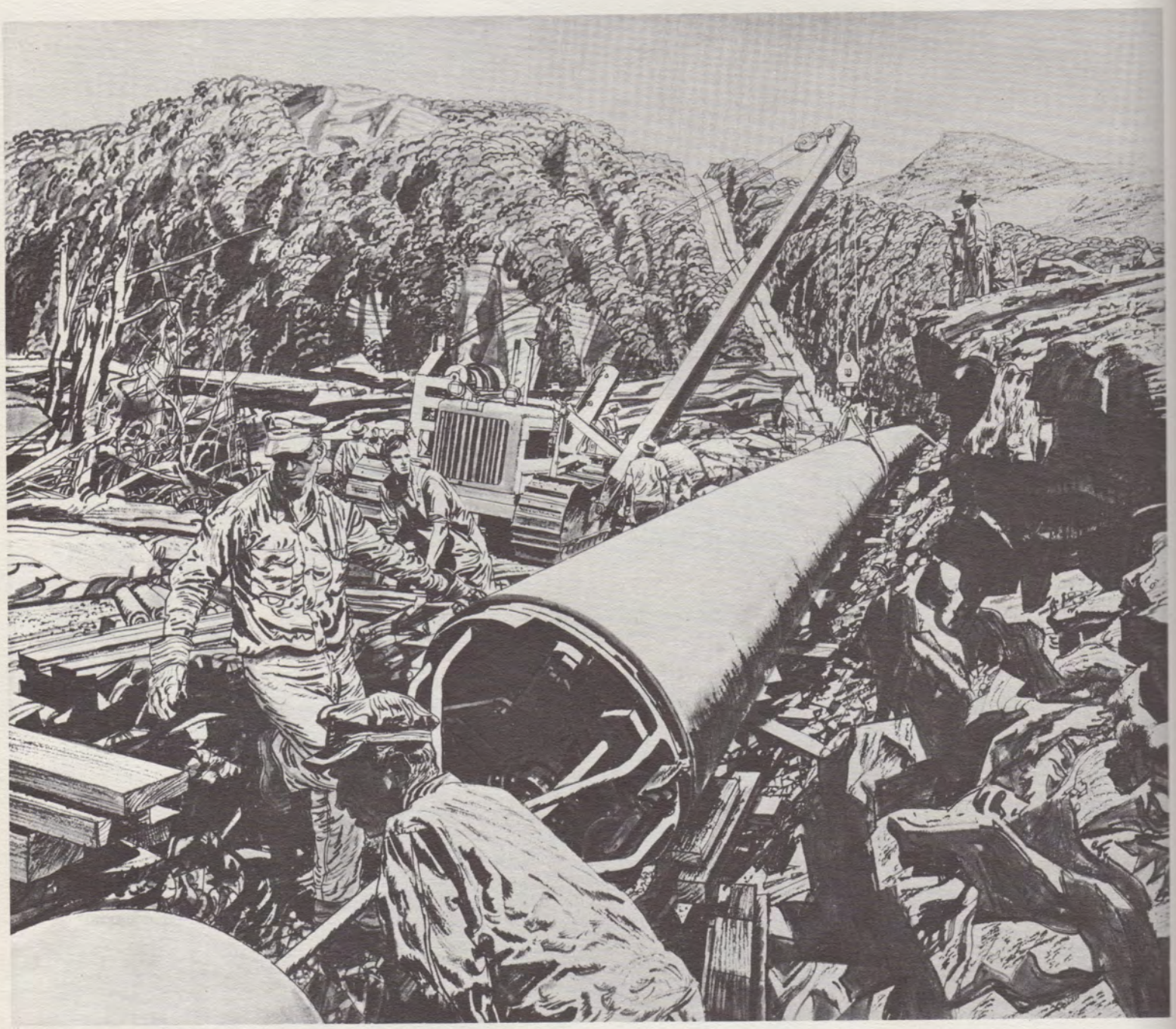
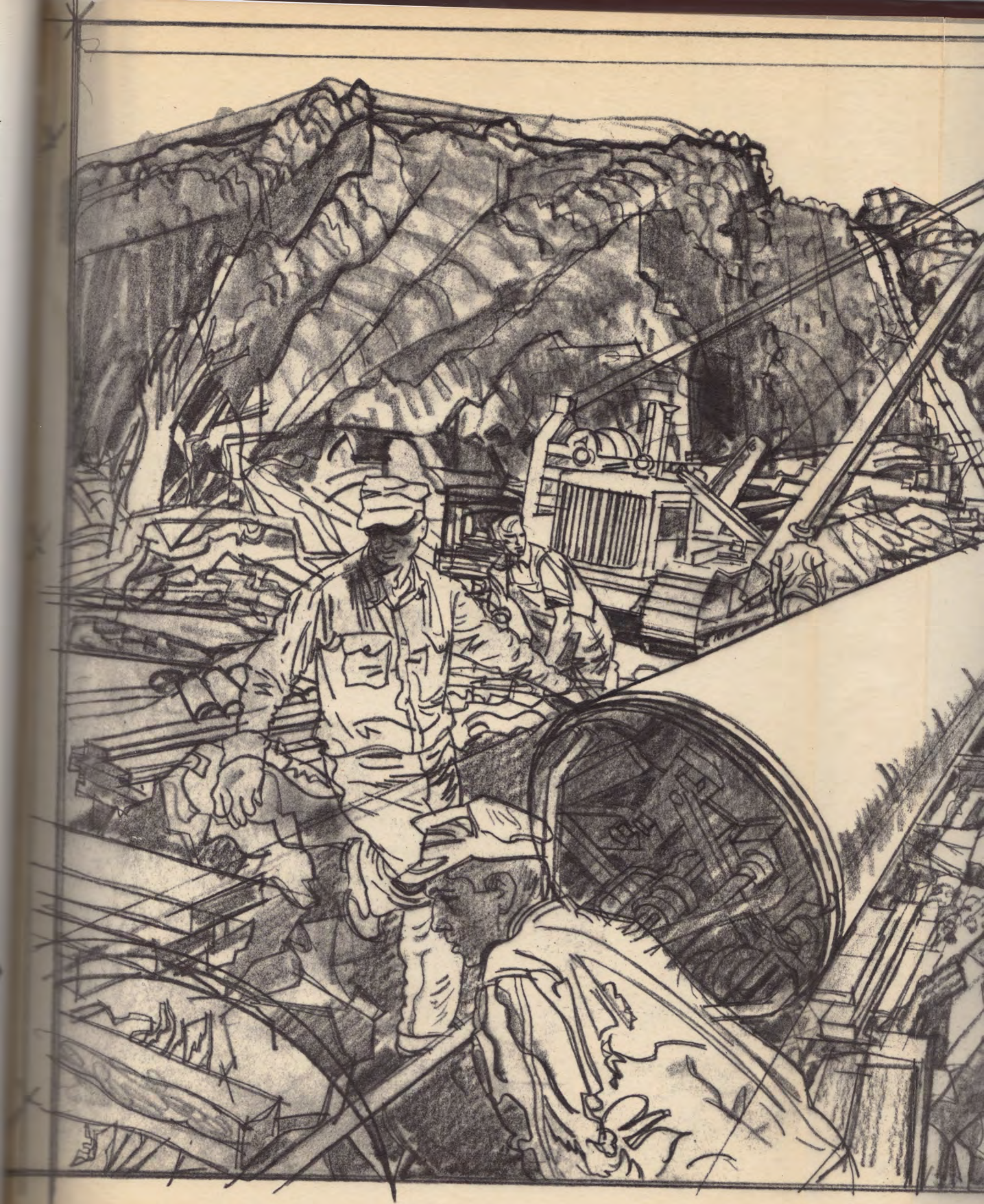
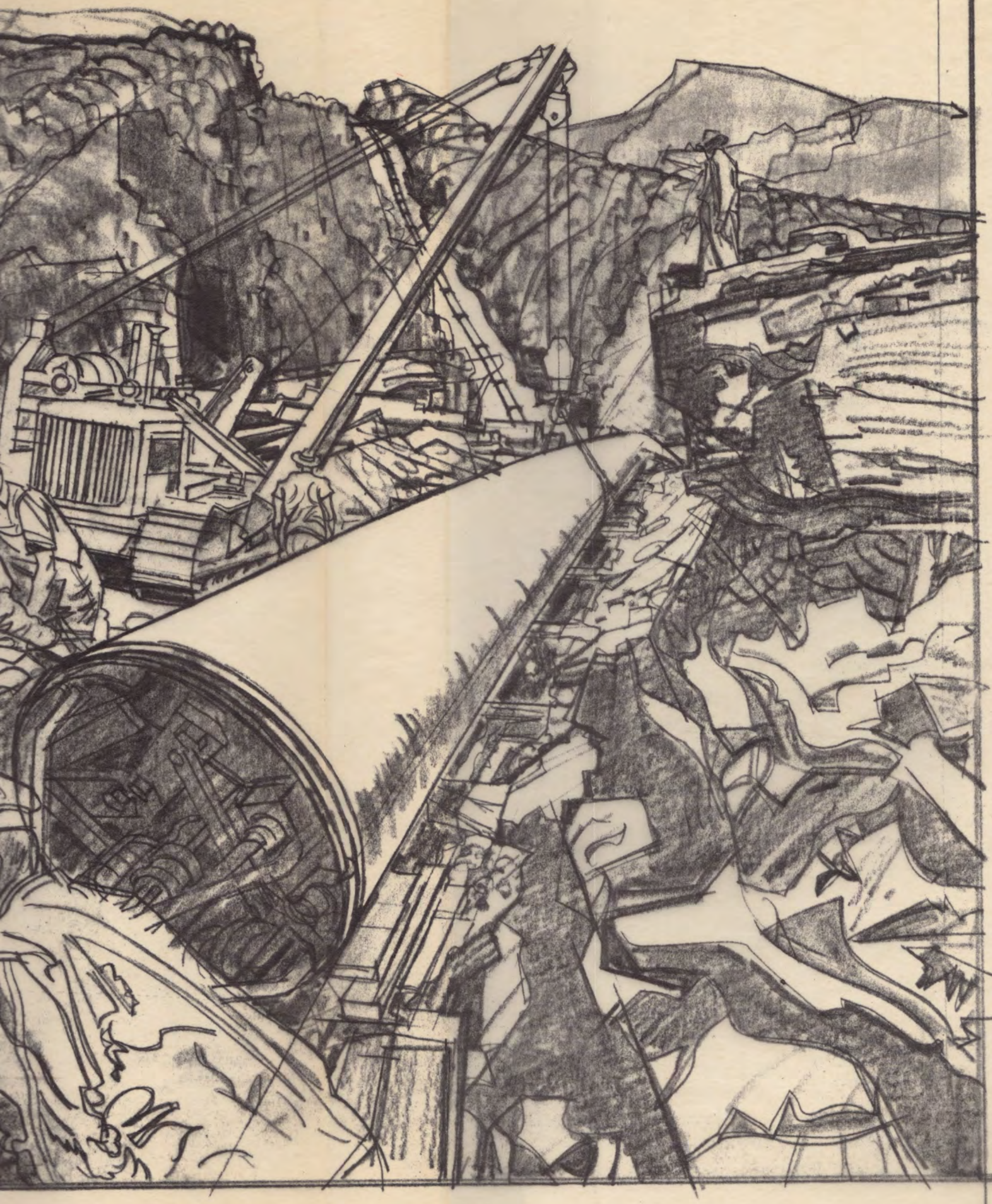


This is the finished picture for which the tracing on the right was a preparation.

To sum up a very important stage, I show you a facsimile of a tracing which I made for an industrial drawing. This is the actual tracing I used. You can even see the double pencil line where I transferred this onto my illustration board. It was the third and last of a series of overtracings, each one varying slightly as I have just described, and each one becoming more satisfactory to me from the viewpoint of space organization. A scribbled tone over certain areas helps me to visualize the pattern of the finish, but most important is the fact that everything is in its place, waiting only the final articulation and texture that the new medium will produce. Rocks on the right are designed as a pattern of light shapes rather than structurally, making sure that the drawing will have a pleasing two-dimensional pattern as well as three-dimensional depth. Let me re-emphasize the value of this procedure. In painting in oil or other opaque media I doubt whether I would do this as completely. The spatial pattern would slowly evolve on the canvas. But working in a direct medium like ink, the first mark on paper is often the last; everything one does is visible at the finish. For this reason preparation and planning are necessary to avoid a messy looking drawing, and I believe that planning is most easily done as I show you here.





How I make a picture

by R.F. ROBERT FAWCETT

lesson 3

MEMBER OF THE FACULTY OF

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

Westport, Connecticut

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2 The start of the finish

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This is the detail from the illustration on the opposite page. Here I want to show you the method of drawing which I will emphasize more clearly in this lesson. In this particular example the first approach is not lost as it so often is when the picture goes into full tone or color. Retaining this has given me a reportorial effect or that of a spontaneous sketch which this subject matter called for. Actually it was pretty thoroughly thought out before I started, and I imagine several tracings and over-tracings, as described in the previous lesson, were used before I finally began the rendering. One can be spontaneous when the donkey work is all done beforehand.

Actual size detail.

—By permission Saturday Evening Post © 1948 Curtis Pub. Co.

This "black and white" illustration for *The Post* is chiefly noteworthy for the use of white space in the drawing. Wherever you see white, it is the paper, and the figures form a filigree of pattern throughout the space. The picture is not a "vignette" just because I have done this. The white functions spatially just as if it were a tone and the effect is that of a rectangular picture. The use of textures — brick, clapboard, leaves, etc., gives interest to an otherwise tenuous design. With the line pattern functioning, I am able to create a feeling of depth in the scene with comparatively slight tone variations.

Establishing the Design

First procedure with the finished drawing

At the end of the last lesson, I had described my procedure in making an illustration up to the point where I had a tracing on my illustration board. I was all set — ready to begin the finished picture. Now, before we start, let us review what has happened, with emphasis on some of the aesthetic considerations, for these, in the end, are the only factors worth discussion.

Much of my *work* has already been done, yet the drawing itself has not yet been started. What I have accomplished up to this point is to assemble and order all of the elements which will go into my illustration. Seemingly all I have to do right now is to start painting. I think of this in a different way.

I know that it is still possible for the picture to "go to pieces," to fall apart, to remain "uncongealed," so I am determined at this stage to weld all of the elements into a homogeneous whole. My problem is to convert my collection of facts into *one* statement which, when seen, will be comprehended immediately, with no chance for misinterpretation. Of course, some kind of picture would result if I ignored all this. After all, I have arranged the elements — figures and accessories — with some care. If I rendered them without further consideration, a picture would result but I would not be *entirely* happy with that result.

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This impression that a picture does — or does not — "hang together" is difficult to describe. It is something that must be felt and the feeling develops only with experience. This experience involves your whole cultural development, your interest in *all* pictures of every period and especially in the best contemporary painting. You cannot become a good illustrator and still remain in a mental and cultural vacuum.

Outside stimulation

If they are available, you will profit immeasurably by visiting all the art galleries and museums regularly and come to "know" pictures intimately. You should also buy art books and prints of drawings and paintings and study them carefully. At the theater you will become conscious of gesture — the right gesture and movement. You will be stimulated and influenced by the lighting effects at the movies. (You may sometimes wonder why such dramatic effects are less effective in photographic illustration, but the absence of the darkened theater and brilliant lights have much to do with it.)

You need all this knowledge, this experience, this stimulation because the business of being an illustrator is difficult at best. What you are endeavoring to do in a picture is to reproduce a moment of action. You must strive, by all the means at your command, to give the impression of movement, preceding and following the moment of action frozen in your picture.

"Plasticity" is a difficult word to understand because it requires some knowledge of modern aesthetics, but you will develop this sense also with experience, and you will not be satisfied until your picture possesses this quality. It is one way of describing that "hanging together" feeling — an impression of solidity.

Naturally, you will learn by studying the best art work in the periodicals, but if you study this to the exclusion of other art, you will limit your aesthetic development. You will not produce much which is fresh and original in your own drawings and you will run the risk of becoming an imitator. Art directors are constantly beset by young artists whose work is, in a way, competent, but which is imitative and lacking in originality. There is a market for such work but the competition is very keen, as might be expected.

When I was beginning, I determined to concentrate on developing and improving myself instead of trying to sell what I was capable of doing at that time. For years I ignored any opportunities to make and sell pictures, and earned my living doing lettering and minor commercial jobs. This kept me alive and allowed me to develop my ability until the time when I felt ready to demonstrate it. This was a sort of Jekyll and Hyde procedure, but it did have the advantage of holding something in reserve, and perhaps prolonging a career which might otherwise have reached its peak in a short time.

Timidity may have activated me to adopt such a plan, and I am not advocating that you follow it. Many artists have arrived at the top very early and, by continuing to develop and progress, have stayed there. It is a personal matter — this planning a career — and I suspect it is better and always more natural to try to produce at the top of your ability. The important thing is to remain only partially satisfied.

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A picture that got off to a weak start

1 Here is a pencil and crayon sketch for an advertising drawing which I will describe to you. I have carried it a bit further than I usually do because this was for submission to the agency for an OK, and also because I wanted to work out a few problems in light for my own guidance later.

2 This is a beginning for the advertising illustration. As you see, it is tentative and weak. The subject is a rather sentimental one, a retiring employee is receiving a watch from his colleagues. The sentiment of the story has influenced me and this start lacks vigor.

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3 I persisted in finishing it, and this is the result as I finally abandoned it. You can see that the weak start was never overcome and the picture lacks authority. I was wrong in believing that a tender situation had to be approached sentimentally. The client never saw this failure.

4 Here is the makeover in progress. It already has greater vitality and more sparkle, and I have confidence it will be all right. I draw your attention here to the way I draw in the blacks, making the bold statement wherever possible. The finish is to be in full color and this underlying structure will later be modified with colored inks, dyes and tempera, so I must be bold now.

5 Here is a closeup at a slightly later stage — perhaps an hour later. You see how I go about developing the design, working from part to part, all over. I fit things together in a way which I know will not create problems of vagrant edges later. This is not a casual, slap-dash process. It is a slow deliberate building. While I draw this way, I begin to see how things will develop later and what color is suggested. In this particular drawing I am departing somewhat from my usual method of leaving character until the end. This assignment is primarily a character situation and besides I know from my sketch how I want the picture to compose. The change in pose of the central character was a second consideration. The first version looked too much as though he were sizing up the gift critically. In this version he is more enthusiastic. You see the importance of gesture, how slight is the difference between the right and wrong impression. The client who is trying to sell the idea of giving watches as gifts is very sensitive to these things. We learn to anticipate him and be equally sensitive.

6 This is the final drawing as it appeared. There is not much to say about it except that to me it is a big improvement upon the first version which I discarded. If this is so, it justified the trouble I took in doing it over.

Courtesy the Watchmakers of Switzerland

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Always put things down boldly and let the brush play freely and with precision. In large measure let the brush dictate the forms. This is about the actual size. A flat worn brush can often be used like a chisel.

Reproduced actual size.

The bold statement

Now, keeping in mind the importance of my picture's "hanging together," I am ready to start drawing. I use a fairly large water color brush with a fairly blunt point, and waterproof ink, either straight or diluted with water. I prefer it diluted so that it makes a dark gray line. In making a black and white drawing for halftone, working in this middle tone allows for overworking to pure black where I want it later. In a color drawing, a dilution makes it unnecessary to kill solid black later, and the over-painting with colored inks blends to give the gray some color.

I simply ignore the warning that waterproof ink does not mix with water because I know it does. This dilution would not do for a flat wash, but I seldom have reason to lay absolutely flat washes. Over an area, it leaves a brush texture which can be quite pleasing if it does not become a mannerism.

It is important not to become too finicky at the beginning. I start immediately to establish the design because it will be difficult to revive later unless I do it boldly now. To me, the picture is always very much an over-all design, so I do not start necessarily with faces or figures. I move around freely. I establish a figure, then go to something behind the figure. A large foreground object may get attention then, after which I may proceed to something on the other side. The picture should progress all over, methodically, slowly building up.

If you become interested in a figure at this stage and work on it too attentively, it will stand out like a sore thumb, submerging the rest of the picture. This does not mean that everything in the picture should be of equal importance, but rather that everything should proceed together. Each part of the picture should be drawn well — authoritatively or suggested — but always with the over-all pattern in mind. It is a kind of weaving together of all the elements. Later you can increase importance in one part and decrease it in another.

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Drawing by light

It is also important — and *difficult* — to always draw with regard to the direction of the light in the picture. Everything must make sense visually. I draw *by* light, never drawing the object except as the light falls upon it. My modeling is always a consideration of light coming from a particular direction. When a figure is subjected to a strong side light, I sometimes boldly divide the figure into light and dark with the brush line. This really is only complicating further the line pattern with which I started. This is difficult unless I am working directly from a model, a tone study or a photograph. It is less difficult if I am working in a more formalized manner, without the naturalness and realism which most drawings are required to have.

This is where draftsmanship is important — knowing form and how light affects it. If you have difficulty visualizing the play of light on objects or figures, take to heart what has been said previously about draftsmanship. It is the answer to everything.

At this stage, more than ever, I imagine myself as an observer of the scene I am depicting, and all the experience of close observation which has become a habit with

(Text Continued on Page 13)

This is the free brush rendering — drawing by light. In a way it is a calligraphy or handwriting. The spontaneity and vigor must be here now or I will never achieve it later. Because my eye is accurate, the observations are also accurate. They are the foundations upon which the figures will build — upon which the whole picture builds. This is really a method of free design, and as the picture develops, modifications of form as depicted here will take place. I chose three figures at random and just rendered them in black ink. My method is purposely exaggerated in order to show you exactly how I proceed. Later lessons will only re-emphasize this approach and show you how to use it to build the whole picture. In an analogy in which the picture is a finished building, this is the way we lay out bricks.

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In this progression, the drawings (Nos. 1, 2 and 3), explain much better than I can do in words what this business of seeing and designing by light is all about. It is of a simple figure in the act of shaving. You see how I design right from the beginning and how the progress is a slow enrichment of a line formula. This line formula, however, is not a conventional one; it anticipates "light shapes" right at the outset, and in the last (No. 4) you see the emergence of the "picture idea." In this, forms within the figure interplay with forms around and beyond it and make the solid structure of the picture. I have purposely left these forms abstract so that you can see what I mean. To have identified them would have lessened the clarity of the idea I am trying to put over, and which I will repeat again and again during this course. It is of primary importance. This is the essence of it in very simple diagrammatic form. In the last drawing I have also started to indicate texture. Later we will

Reproduced actual size.

see how this interplay of texture as well as shape adds to, and is so necessary to, the vitality of the picture. If this is "modernism," make the most of it. I am a modernist because I happen to live in the 20th Century, and to me this is one of its pictorial applications to commercial ends. I could go further and reduce the thing to its plastic equivalents, but I will not at this time. Perhaps later, in order to break you loose from conventional thinking, we will experiment with this further stage.

I will not deceive you about this. It is not child's play. An extremely accurate eye and the ability to reduce observations to "the flat" are very necessary. That is why I urge you to be constantly drawing — as accurately as possible. Only then will you be able to put that knowledge in the back of your mind and concern yourself with the more interesting aspects of seeing.

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12 The start of the finish

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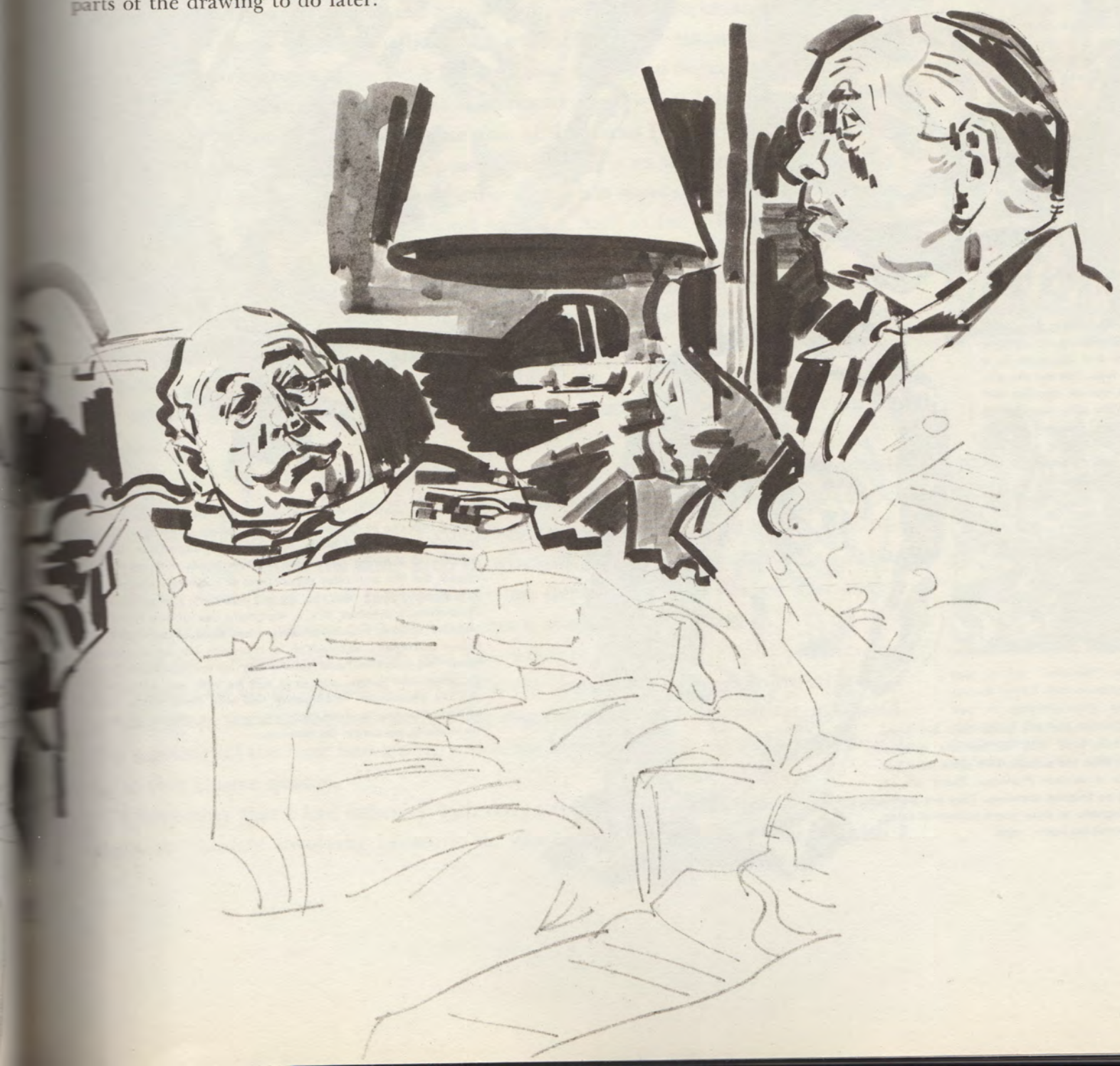
Here is an example of using the traced pencil line pattern to "improvise" upon, not to slavishly copy. You see here the traced line, and then how the ink and brush play all around it, in and out, forward and beyond, but always obeying some instinct which adds up to an informal design. I have been told I am not a "realistic" illustrator, yet I am always trying to make things as real as I know how. However I won't, or it seems that I cannot, stop designing. This drawing is only a demonstration for you to study. Some will say these look *better* in this stage, before they are finished — I know this. There is always a fascination in the half finished drawing which the finished seems to lack, but it isn't a legitimate end unless an "effect" is all I am after. I always aim to achieve as high a degree of finish as I can, and I am thwarted in this only when a degree of organization in the picture tells me that further finishing will just be padding.

Reproduced actual size.

me aids in directing everything I put down. Naturalness itself is not the aim. I still think in terms of the picture, but every brush line is a combination of realism and design — *design dictated by a knowledge of visual facts.* I do not erase at this time. If something is incorrect, I put down the second thought, because towards completion I may find things have changed and that no correction is necessary. I keep adding to the ink dilution I am using because if it dries, it becomes "crumby" and that is bad.

"Designing by light" is so important and so interesting that you will find me constantly reiterating its importance. Designing by light requires much experience and knowledge, but once mastered, it opens up almost unlimited possibilities for picture interest.

In the line tracing stage, I am careful not to follow the lines mechanically. What I really do — and this is important — is use this line pattern as a device upon which to *improvise.* I work all around the pattern like a musician improvising on a simple theme. Another aim at this stage is to carry the drawing *just as far as I can* within the limitations of the restricted medium I am using. I am not led astray by the knowledge that there are other stages to come, other media to use. I deliberately leave certain parts of the drawing to do later.



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The start of the finish

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From a snapshot of myself in a rather sceptical mood, I show you four stages in rendering a head. These are done in black ink, later diluted with water in a saucer. The important thing is the fact that the approach is free and moderately inventive.

The traced lines are all I need to start; then, beginning with black on the most important facts I let the head develop.

Now from the same snapshot, but with characters in mind, I have painted these other heads, with much greater invention. These are freely done with a minimum of pencilling, in opaque water color. This first character is a portly "colonel" type. You see the difference between slavish copying and free invention. With the character in mind before I start, I merely consult the snap for facts of light and construction which are common to all faces with this expression.

Again you see it is from the same snap, but this time converted into one of the strange exotic-looking characters I like to draw. The original photo was chiefly an expression. Long practice at drawing allows me to draw heads with my eyes closed, but this particular supercilious or sceptical expression is a fleeting thing and may be an important element in an illustration. I consider this a legitimate use of the camera. Nobody accuses Brahms of plagiarism because he chose a theme of Haydn's upon which to improvise his set of variations. The invention and spontaneity of the variations are the important things, and so it will be with you when you use the photograph intelligently and with imagination. But without learning to draw, you will never be able to do this successfully, so always be drawing.

It is still basically the same face but transformed this time into an entirely different character than the colonel. This could be a bartender or a western character. These are not meant to be finished drawings. They are merely quick diagrams to show you a method of using, and improvising upon, copy.

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In a way, I feel that any stage of the drawing, as far as I have gone, should be complete. The small sketch or doodle was complete for what it was. The tracings were complete for what *they* were. Suppose my client appeared at this point and said, "Something has developed and we must have your picture right now, just as it is." While such a thing probably would never happen, I like to feel that I could hand him the picture with the knowledge that it was complete as far as I have progressed with it. In other words, it should *always* be a picture, right from the start. At progressive stages, it is in varying degrees of completion. Working in this way, my rear is always protected!

I never try to "slough off" or avoid a complicated piece of drawing. Sometimes I spend hours working on some detail which I know will be almost invisible when the picture is reduced in reproduction size. I have been asked whether this requires patience. Patience is not the word, but it does require a capacity for infinite pains, and an intense enthusiasm which makes no effort too much trouble in the creating of the best possible picture.

Just suppose a bookcase appears in a scene. It is not very important and occupies a very small space. I try to inject a pleasing variety of pattern and color in the books, regardless of the size of the area and how I might reduce the importance of the bookcase later. Because I did this, the little area will have its own eloquence. What could have been dead becomes alive and will contribute its part to the complete picture. I think always in "picture" terms, never in character terms — until the very end.

Of course, I think in this way because most of the stories I illustrate are of a serious nature, or at least have good picture possibilities. This is no accident. I ask constantly for this kind of fiction. I decided very early that it was short-sighted for *me* to try to build a career by illustrating adolescent romance, and, so far, I have not regretted this decision.

It has been said, and it is true, that the best literature actually requires no illustrating. But because illustration is my livelihood, I feel that when a good story calls for illustrations, the least I can do is to produce pictures which, in interest and dignity, will complement the story. I often fail but when I do, it is usually because a "mood" has escaped me. When this happens, no amount of technical skill will make up for the lack.

I try to achieve a feeling of authenticity in historical pictures by projecting myself *into* the scene. I remind myself that the scene, except for the difference of subject matter, is basically what the same scene would be today. It is lighted by the same sun coming through much the same kind of windows. The people probably had habits similar to ours. They stuck letters in mirrors, they left clothing draped over chairs, they stood, talked, walked and gestured much as we do.

Some periods are more formal, and I note this in my study of period pictures and reproduce this air of formality. I do this at the stage when I am planning on tracing paper. When I am in the present drawing stage, another consideration enters — welding together all the facts into a style which has become my own and satisfying myself as to that elusive quality.

I remember that I had difficulty with the picture whose setting was in the Middle Ages, an incident involving Leonardo da Vinci painting the "Mona Lisa" which I

This is the "formal" approach to picture making, which by its nature gives a "period" feeling. It is a free brush drawing on paper with lamp black watercolor and no pencilling.

This is the "informal" modern approach which the development and use of photography has largely created. If there is one quality which is characteristic of most pictorial art of today, it is this "candid" quality.

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The start of the finish

An illustration demonstrating the bold statement and drawing by light

—Courtesy Woman's Home Companion

Here is a fairly complicated illustration which originally ran over two pages, and two details from it which I draw to your attention. The English "bobby" is not a pretty character but he *is* a character. In the story he was a country cop — a yokel in uniform, and I adhered to this description.

There is the same bold "designy" quality in these renderings which you saw in the previous 4-figure diagram I made for this lesson, and in general a remote corner of the illustration has its own pictorial entity — things fit together and make a pattern. In the second detail I draw your attention to the way the girl is framed by the bookcase behind her. I believe that this serves to focus attention and also add an interest and authenticity to the room — a point I made in the text. Don't make a fetish of devices like this. Let them always come easily and naturally. The moment they look obvious and studied they defeat their purpose (like arrows or fingers pointing).

reproduced in the first lesson. Naturally I consulted many pictures of the period for costumes and interiors, including photographs of period rooms which have been preserved. For costumes, I studied costume plates and contemporary painting but the latter influenced me away from the job at hand and threw me off the track.

Always a great admirer of Italian Renaissance painting, I became involved in trying too hard to capture the flavor of the period by attempting to imitate some of the more superficial Renaissance picture qualities. I did not notice this until the almost finished drawing refused to "jell." Then I realized why. It was not completely *my* drawing (and it most certainly was not of the Italian school). I became suspicious when I found myself dawdling, fixing up, paying attention to detail before the thing was complete as a *picture*. I wanted to discard it and do it over but time and the art director would not allow this, and so I delivered it with personal reservations.

I cite this example to show that no matter how much experience you have had, it is still very easy to be led astray and come up with less than a completely satisfactory thing. This was not a failure, but no matter how completely some parts of the painting were handled, the whole thing could have been better. It could be said that this figure or that head was good but to me, in its over-all aspect, the picture was not quite right and something told me so. Refer back to this painting in Lesson 1 and see if you can see what I mean. If you think it is all right as it is, that's fine. Perhaps I'm hypocritical.

It takes nerve to discard several days of work for a consideration which the public, or even the client, may not notice or may consider no defect if it is noticed. One test of the artist is his feeling that he is on his own, that he must be satisfied to stand or fall by the results he produced. If time is not too pressing, it is better to do a drawing over and be completely or, at least, more satisfied with it. The new version usually proceeds more easily by using the old one as a sketch but avoiding the pitfalls in it which led to trouble.

By showing you how fallible I am — how fallible we all are — I am hoping to convince you that if you have a feeling of incompetence, the feeling is far from unique. Perhaps you believed that by embarking on this course you would learn "how," and after that everything would be smooth sailing. That is not so unless you would be satisfied merely to gain a moderate facility, then be content to repeat — and to atrophy.

Either you make progress in art or you retrogress. You do not stand still, that is certain. Even if you are determined to make your career one of constant development and slow maturing, you still will have failures. I know of no way to avoid them.

I do not expect you to grasp immediately the idea of "drawing by light." My diagrams, however, will begin to demonstrate what I mean. I am assuming you are clinging to hard outlines as a cripple clings to his crutch and I want to show you the possibilities of outlines which do not merely *surround* a figure, but which play all through and beyond it. I want to suggest the added interest which this kind of drawing imparts to your picture.

As for the painting which I started at the beginning of this lesson, I still am working in a gray line but I cannot help anticipating variations of this. Some parts are drawn with a lighter gray, others are darker, a suggestion and a reminder to me that when I use a large brush, I must organize the picture more broadly and in larger terms.

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Always a great admirer of Italian Renaissance painting, I became involved in trying too hard to capture the flavor of the period by attempting to imitate some of the more superficial Renaissance picture qualities. I did not notice this until the almost finished drawing refused to "jell." Then I realized why. It was not completely *my* drawing (and it most certainly was not of the Italian school). I became suspicious when I found myself dawdling, fixing up, paying attention to detail before the thing was complete as a *picture*. I wanted to discard it and do it over but time and the art director would not allow this, and so I delivered it with personal reservations.

I cite this example to show that no matter how much experience you have had, it is still very easy to be led astray and come up with less than a completely satisfactory thing. This was not a failure, but no matter how completely some parts of the painting were handled, the whole thing could have been better. It could be said that this figure or that head was good but to me, in its over-all aspect, the picture was not quite right and something told me so. Refer back to this painting in Lesson 1 and see if you can see what I mean. If you think it is all right as it is, that's fine. Perhaps I'm hypocritical.

It takes nerve to discard several days of work for a consideration which the public, or even the client, may not notice or may consider no defect if it is noticed. One test of the artist is his feeling that he is on his own, that he must be satisfied to stand or fall by the results he produced. If time is not too pressing, it is better to do a drawing over and be completely or, at least, more satisfied with it. The new version usually proceeds more easily by using the old one as a sketch but avoiding the pitfalls in it which led to trouble.

By showing you how fallible I am — how fallible we all are — I am hoping to convince you that if you have a feeling of incompetence, the feeling is far from unique. Perhaps you believed that by embarking on this course you would learn "how," and after that everything would be smooth sailing. That is not so unless you would be satisfied merely to gain a moderate facility, then be content to repeat — and to atrophy.

Either you make progress in art or you retrogress. You do not stand still, that is certain. Even if you are determined to make your career one of constant development and slow maturing, you still will have failures. I know of no way to avoid them.

I do not expect you to grasp immediately the idea of "drawing by light." My diagrams, however, will begin to demonstrate what I mean. I am assuming you are clinging to hard outlines as a cripple clings to his crutch and I want to show you the possibilities of outlines which do not merely *surround* a figure, but which play all through and beyond it. I want to suggest the added interest which this kind of drawing imparts to your picture.

As for the painting which I started at the beginning of this lesson, I still am working in a gray line but I cannot help anticipating variations of this. Some parts are drawn with a lighter gray, others are darker, a suggestion and a reminder to me that when I use a large brush, I must organize the picture more broadly and in larger terms.

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The start of the finish

A reminder about planning

You may have thought that Lesson 2 was a trifle dull. To me it represented an extremely important step and I would like to return to it with these further examples of the planning stage. Above are six photographs for which I posed myself. The only figure called for in the picture was a recumbent peon enjoying a siesta. I had six photographs taken in order to distill the "essence of recumbency." One of them had to be more expressive of the pose than the others, although they all look fairly relaxed. I chose the one which seemed to have what I wanted, and then felt that the arm lying across the body seemed to add something more. Also the nearer arm in another picture was a bit more expressive of complete relaxation than the one in the figure I chose, and that also was noted. I show you also the first and final tracings (as in Lesson 2) for the composition. You will note that although this is a one figure picture — a mood picture conveying the idea of lassitude in a tropical climate — the composition still is considered with the same care as though there were half a dozen figures. These photographs were a great help to me in realizing the action of the figure, but only for that. The picture itself, its organization, the disposition of the contributing atmosphere details, weaving the scene into one statement — these constitute the real work. There is one other point. I posed myself, as I invariably do, because then I could *feel* the pose. Looking at a posed model, I might have been able to see a lot of interesting things, but to *feel* the action by doing it myself — that is the way I work best. This picture is also an example of drawing by light and making the bold statement, two of the points stressed earlier in this lesson.

How I make a picture

by R.F. ROBERT FAWCETT

lesson 4

MEMBER OF THE FACULTY OF

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2 The second stage

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In the last lesson, I spoke of the beginning stages of the black, brush rendering. You know from a previous lesson that a lot of preparation preceded this. These three small pictures demonstrate that, with this preparation, I can jump around from place to place, confident that things will come together in the end. This corresponds to the "stained glass" effect, but is, of course, a far less formal and mechanical thing than the lead pattern the glazier uses.

Now, in this lesson, I begin to wash in tone with a large brush and design the picture more eloquently—to give it some life and movement. The flat oil sable brushes (sometimes hog hair) that I use for this have quite long handles, thus enabling one to stand well away from the drawing and see the design more boldly. This particular drawing was in two colors, black and yellow. When reproduction limits me in this way it is all the more important that the tone values be right. Everything I do from now on—as I have already done—is with the thought that the light source is from the fireplace, which does not show, at the lower left.

Second Stage

By now, we are well into a discussion of my method. Let me emphasize again that it is *my* method and need not necessarily become yours. You are now beginning to know how I think. Although I know that you will develop your own method, perhaps some of the things which I have explained to you, things which concern or bother or intrigue me, will influence your own thinking.

Try to make each picture a better one than you have ever done before. Do not allow what I say to inhibit you in any way. Remember that the best pictures just seem to "pour out."

If you find that the pictures which you have done up to this point seem to have a sameness about them, try something entirely different. If your figures have been small, determine to make larger ones. Or better still, combine large and small figures to inject a feeling of distance or depth into your picture. If you have been confining yourself to interiors, try exteriors or vice versa. Try to see every scene differently.

By now, you should be aware of some of the "musts" in this profession. You must be sure, for example, that your details are correct. Remember that editors dislike receiving letters from readers pointing out inaccuracies in a magazine illustration. It is your job, aside from making a good drawing or painting, to be sure that such mistakes do not occur, so it is well to develop this habit of accuracy early.

Sometimes, however, very mediocre pictures can be extremely authentic, and often are. It is also possible, although I do not advise it, to paint pictures which are full of technical inaccuracies, yet which express all the mood, action, atmosphere and imagination that anyone could desire. The artist with such talent might endear himself to me but would not be welcomed by magazine editors.

If you find that the course is getting a little tough to digest, let me say that what I am explaining in these first lessons is really the meat of the whole course. It is obvious that in commercial art and illustration, one's capabilities are called on, to a greater or lesser degree, each time a picture is made. Some jobs pose a very simple problem and call for a simple, crisp, economical solution. Later on in the course, we will go into this, as a kind of dessert, but meanwhile I will try to explain to you the possibilities when you are on your own, with no limitations imposed. With a big picture space to fill and a good literate manuscript to illustrate, I always feel the challenge to extend myself. Then later, when a simpler problem comes along, I find it easier. Because I experimented when I had the opportunity, my technique has become more firm.

There are little tricks and shortcuts which will be useful if you are just starting out, but I think you will find that they are variations or offshoots of an over-all method which I am trying to clarify in these first lessons. I would prefer that you try to absorb this now, even though you will understand it more completely later. If you are contemplating work in a studio or advertising agency, remember that you will not be called upon to do finished drawings at first. But there are ways of doing preliminary layouts and sketches which will not only be salable to the prospective client, but which will endear you to the artist who will be called in to supply the finished drawing.

At the conclusion of the previous lesson, my drawing had reached the stage in which it appears in the accompanying illustration. From this point, the method will be less rigid, the procedure will "open up" and the approach will become more one of feeling. I will analyze my own thinking for you from this point to the completion of a black and white drawing in tone.

By this time, I have often departed from strict adherence to the diluted black and white line described in the last lesson. Anticipating large tonal areas as I proceed, I put them down as part of the drawing. In fact, they belong there legitimately if I am strongly impelled to put them there. You see that while I describe what sounds like a rigid procedure for working, it is a method which does permit variation.

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I approach each illustration as a brand new experience. If possible, I never start a new drawing in terms of a technique which I already know, but rather as something with no relationship to previous experience. To you, this may seem silly. You may well ask, "What use is his experience or aptitude if he does not profit by them?" I can only say that it is better to keep this knowledge and experience down in the finger tips where it belongs, and not allow it to enter the conscious mind too much.

Facility develops and sometimes I notice habits forming in my way of working which I am later tempted to admire. But I must resist this temptation because then I am on the verge of repeating myself — of using cliches which become a bore. The fact that they may be *my own* cliches, individual habits which I have developed as a result of my enthusiasm and experience, does not make them more acceptable. The danger is always present of becoming repetitious, and that is deadly.

I know that there is already enough — too much — in my working method which is automatic and habitual and because of that, a drawing of mine will always look like it is mine when I have finished. That I cannot avoid. We all recognize the work of each other at once, and have no need to consult the signature in the corner for verification. Let me repeat a previous warning at this point. Do not become *consciously* mannered if you can help it. In describing a way of working, I am already aware of the possible variations of the method which make my exposition less than true, and my argument in favor of the method less than dogmatic.

Usually, editorial illustration allows the imagination much more freedom than most advertising drawings. A variation of this generalization occurs when some repetition is required in an editorial illustration because of other considerations. In illustrating a magazine serial, for example, I think the pictures should not only have an individual identity, but also a continuity of appearance to reinforce the printed title and make identification easier for the reader. Likewise, in an advertising campaign which depends for its success on a cumulative or repetitive effect, the drawings should reflect this and be more repetitive in appearance than perhaps the artist would otherwise make them.

These are merely examples of the restrictions which are imposed upon the commercial illustrator, but they are not too inhibiting. The recognition of a restriction makes an artist a more intelligent and cooperative member of a "team," and such an attitude will be recognized and appreciated by the art director of the magazine or advertising agency, who must assume responsibility for the pictures he buys for his client.

At the particular stage of my drawing at which we have now arrived, it can become almost anything. As you know, I used the original line tracing only as a framework around which to improvise. The next stage represents further improvisation around what is already there. I have all the essential facts down and will employ tone to simplify the design and give the picture more simplicity and cohesiveness. This is where some of the large, flat brushes, mentioned at the conclusion of the last lesson, are used.

Now comes the advantage to me of having drawn in black waterproof ink, even in dilution. I go over the whole picture, considering it in its larger aspects, without being governed by the marks already in place. I can go over them and do, thereby reducing their visibility without eradicating or blurring them. If I had used a water-soluble medium up to this stage, I could not do this and would be forced to proceed with extreme caution. Hence I would be without the freedom to improvise and design as I feel is necessary now.

I begin to emphasize drama where drama is necessary, to develop tensions in the picture or to lessen them. Now I can group isolated objects, place emphasis where it is required and reduce minor elements to unimportance. Much of what I do at this stage cannot always be justified consciously except that "it seems right." This is experience entering the picture, taste developed over years of picture making, and this is a difficult thing to pass along to someone else. I will show you *what* I do by means of diagrams, but *why* I do it is something which I do not always know myself. You will develop this sense too. It is the accumulation of years of visual experience, looking at things and making them "look right."

When I am in a room — even if I am deep in conversation — I find myself looking out the window and unconsciously framing the scene I observe, moving my eyes up, down, sidewise until what I see pleases me.

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The second stage

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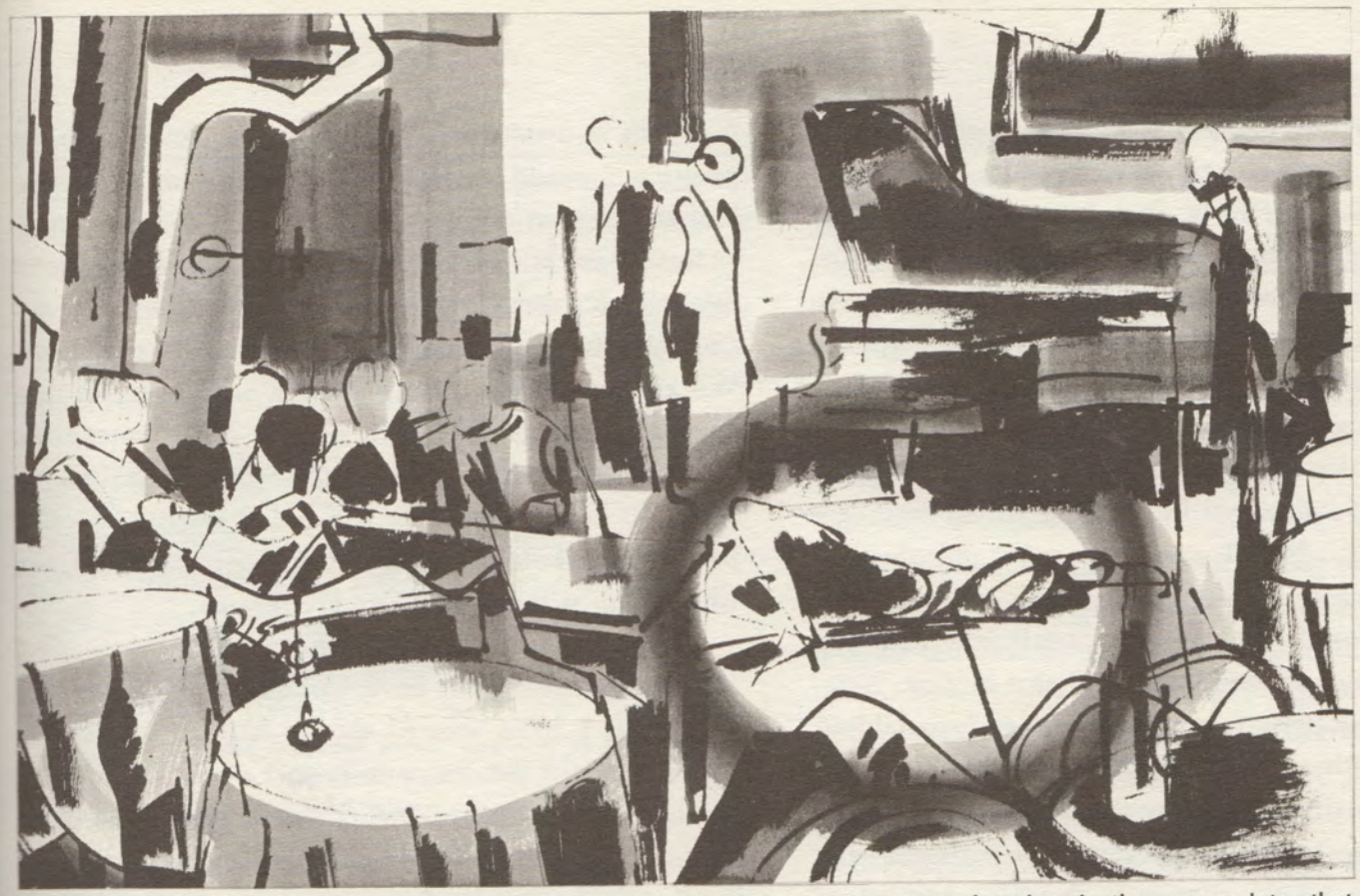
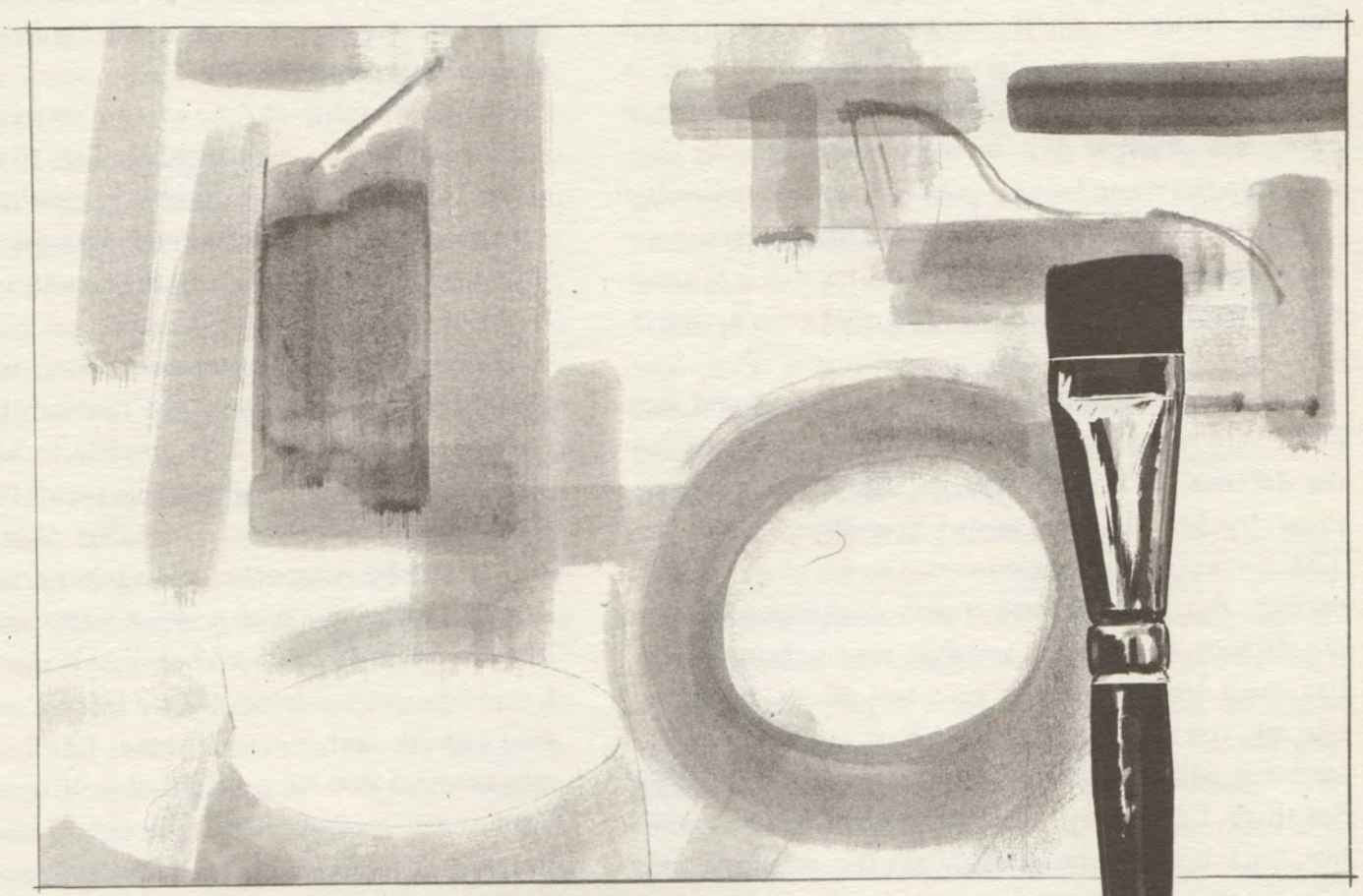


I have made this diagram to show what might be my procedure as I go into tone. Imagine, in the upper plate, that what I have indicated roughly in black is a fairly careful waterproof ink rendering of a situation. I am starting to wash a thin dilution of the same ink over and into this.



The point I make here is that I start with something that seems to be quite independent of the line pattern underneath. For instance, I have circled a prone figure on the floor because I want to emphasize this. Although in progressing, this will disappear as a circle, what it suggests in the final tone pattern will remain, and the emphasis will be where I want it. I point this out to show you that I feel there should often be a subsidiary pattern operating which may not be created by the subject matter. It has an identity and validity of its own. A fairly large, oil sable is good for this. Mine is about one inch wide and well-worn.

It is lucky for me that window frames are rectangular because I am happiest with a rectangular shape. I indulge in visual exercises, drawing without actually putting things down on paper. The habit is useful as everything can be useful, but this is a particular eccentricity of mine because I am obsessed with "pattern." It is part of achieving that "stained glass window" feeling I mentioned in an earlier lesson, and which, to me, represents a nice, safe jumping-off place.

I have been influenced by "feeling" in all the stages up to this point. Now I can let go a bit and obey my feeling even more. When I was tracing and retracing, I was often moved by a conscious, analytical reasoning — moving things around because of this or that. Now, what was a line pattern becomes tonal and spatial and I am faced with a new and different set of considerations. Occasionally, I see where the original line pattern was inadequate because I did not fully anticipate the final effect. So now I change it. Nothing is final or sacred because I am determined to keep the picture as *fluid* as possible. Many times I take out objects or figures which have been with me right from the first doodle. However, when this happens, I usually find that other things are affected. Sometimes it is easier to start over from scratch. Reaching such a decision is never easy. Several days of work must often be consigned to the waste basket. (I have a very large wooden one right in the middle of my studio which you can see in one of the photographs in Lesson 1.) But it is easier to start over than to be dissatisfied after searching self-criticism.

The reasons *against* starting over are many and they occur with monotonous regularity. "People won't know the difference," is one. "The art director may not enthuse, but he will accept what I have done," is another. The money and time elements also enter to provide excuses. But none of these is very convincing because the decision to be made involves your personal integrity and a desire to display your best efforts. If you are like me, you say, "The sooner I start to do it over, the sooner it will be finished *right.*" And that's that. I do not think I am always the best critic of my own work but, until it leaves the studio, I am the *only* critic and I know when I am happy about a result — or less than satisfied. It always goes easier the second time. There is a gain in assurance and, unless time for delivery is pressing, I would just as soon be working on this problem as the next one.

But let us not anticipate a failure. Usually I try to fight the drawing through stages that do not please me and the effort sometimes pays in terms of experience. Working from light to dark as I am, with overpainting of transparencies in diluted inks or other waterproof media, I know that I can correct later with opaque grays. In fact, I anticipate this use of opaque color as part of the whole process and this gives me confidence while I am still in the transparent stage.

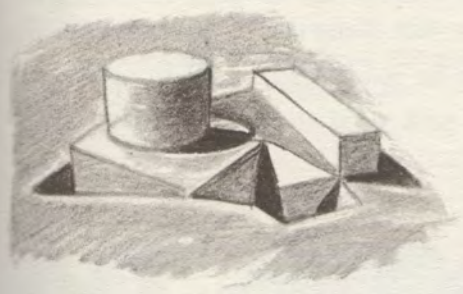
Suppose some details of furniture which I drew carefully the preceding day have, by overpainting, become indistinct. I have wanted this to happen because in order to retain the dramatic impact of the incident, it was necessary to avoid showing how cleverly I can draw atmospheric details. If a piece of irrelevant detail conflicts with the heads of the main characters for chief interest, it must be resolved. No matter how much I enjoyed drawing the detail, I reduced it in value. Later, I can articulate it with an edge or high light which will give it greater eloquence but at the same time allow it to stay back in place.

The relationship of tone areas is very important and a fascinating thing to accomplish. I try to keep the "incident" localized by introducing exciting "business" where needed, allowing quieter passages to become a foil. Actually this almost comes of itself, so it is unnecessary to think about it too much.

In this stage, as in every other, I try to achieve the greatest possible effect with the medium I am using at the time. I know that it is possible to have the tone values of a picture so right, so eloquent, that the effect is almost one of color. The quality of one gray tone against another suggests a cold against a warm. I know that the introduction of a bit of warm and cool color into the grays would accomplish this more easily, but I prefer to try to achieve the same effect without doing this. I think that it can be done. I believe that tonal relationships can be so right that this suggestion of color is achieved and, as in the case of color, elements in the drawing will advance or recede accordingly.

The advantage of doing this, as I see it, is that I keep much more in reserve, and economy of means is as great

a virtue in drawing as in any other form of human endeavor. Sometimes the texture of a tone helps accomplish this effect, a rougher texture advancing while a smoother one recedes. This advance and recession exploits a quality in picture making which is too often ignored and gives the picture depth rather than the usual two dimensional feeling.



When I caught myself doodling at the telephone, I was reassured to see that I was unconsciously doodling solid forms.

It is all very well to have your picture design nicely in the "flat" — vertically and horizontally. This should always be present and it is commonly called 'good design' or 'good composition.' But this element of depth will give the scene a three dimensional quality which will evoke a response from the person who sees it although he may not know just why. The picture has more visual interest.

Of course, I cannot exploit this technique fully in *every* picture I do, for not every one offers sufficient opportunity to extend myself. But it is a useful method to develop. Even in a very simple drawing, the quality of depth can be achieved by comparatively simple means. As you gain this ability, you will develop extra command which will give greater authority to everything that you do.

Get away from your drawing periodically and return to it with a fresh eye. What is your first impression? An all-over thinness or a weakness in parts? Make the correction or increase the emphasis at once before the impression leaves you.

Sometimes a form will please you although you do not know why and you will desire to convey this pleasure to others. You see it because you have become sensitive to form and you will desire to emphasize it so that it is not lost. So you take your brush and emphasize whatever quality attracted you, distorting ever so little. These are "conceits" which cannot be explained or taught. They are signs of the development of the "artist" in you. Some things are difficult to convey and this is one of them. But I will try to do so in words and supplement my verbal shortcomings with exaggerated diagrams.

The beginner or even a person with considerable experience is concerned with adherence to rules. You want things to be right to obviate the possibility of criticism. This is natural and good. The first desire of the child is to please his parents and their codes become his in the beginning. With increasing maturity, he has the impulse to throw off what is not his own, and thus begins the development of the individual, the personality. This simple analogy may explain the impulses which will seize you during your experience in making a picture. They are creative impulses; for this is a creative experience.

If you have no desire for such exploration on your own, the time is not yet ripe. You need something against which to rebel before you start rebelling. A sound, conventional picture is good enough for most students and perhaps I am wrong in suggesting an alternative to you at this early stage.

If you have sufficient urge, your aims will always be far in advance of your manual facility, and this is a good healthy state. You will begin to attain that advancement in realizing these aims, the increasing ability to put down the picture which is in your mind is largely a matter of breaking down barriers within yourself — barriers caused by timidity and fear of failure or a lack of technical competence. You will break down these barriers as you tire of repetition and have the urge to try something new. With each break will come an advance in facility.

Do not be afraid of a failure. You will learn as much from your failures as from your successes — perhaps more. More failures are caused by too much timidity than by too much confidence. I have played a lot of golf. When I play in a match or am trying for a good score, I tighten up as I never do when I am out practicing by myself. This also happens in drawing. So try to maintain the mental attitude that the picture on which you are working is for yourself alone, that no one else need see it. Try this, and you will probably produce something which you will *desire* others to see.

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The second stage

Ways of looking at a picture

In studying the pictures on these two pages, keep in mind that I am *not* trying to demonstrate draftsmanship. I am trying to demonstrate the part that draftsmanship plays in picture organization. Oftentimes, in looking at finished pictures it is difficult to visually extract the important elements of pictorial organization that make the pictures "tick." So, to make this clearer to you than may be readily apparent in looking at finished pictures, I have made these just what they are — diagrams.

1 This diagram indicates some figures seated and squatting around in a market. It could be the basis for a picture. In this I have emphasized "pattern" and some texture. It would not be a very exciting picture, for it is a placid situation, but I draw your attenion to the fact that, rough as it is, it does contain some "picture" qualities. Looked at in "the flat" you see a linear design modified by a pattern of tone and texture. Consider the fruit forms as a contribution to the variety of the design, not as what they could eventually represent.

2 Underlying this is the linear or stained glass quality which I strive to get, although I may eliminate it or reduce its importance later. The stained glass window is a pretty solid visual structure, and a good lead pattern allows the designer to work freely within each isolated area. (Remember that, in this, all I am trying to do is to break down the picture elements—to see what makes the picture tick.)

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3 I have abstracted some of the elements which go to make up the foregoing diagrammatic sketch. The two black areas against white do not complement each other as happily as they would in a finished painting, for I have merely isolated them as they are. I have done the same for the small textured areas which in a finish I might identify, but for the moment I will let them stand as pictorial elements which I believe add to the visual interest.

4 Now, taking the same set of figures, I have tried to create an entirely different mood. From a gentle, sunlit bargaining scene, it becomes one of greater tension. Perhaps an element of suspicion enters. As you see, I have changed the position of the figures slightly, allowing more distance between them. The figures on the right are more tightly grouped, and the lighting now suggests a gloomy interior. But note that the basic attitudes are not changed. It was not necessary to invent a lot of exaggerated gestures or facial expressions. The brush strokes take on an irregularity somehow suggesting tension and anger—the same kind of angular forms take the place of more gentle decorative ones in the first diagram. Curved forms are reduced to a minimum in this and the brush strokes cut incisively, like a chisel.

5 I do hope you have stopped thinking of technique as a flick of the wrist. In case you think that a brush technique can be cultivated by itself and from then on everything is easy, I show you the foregoing scene reduced to its actual sculptured forms. This is how one must unconsciously visualize the elements, if the finished picture is to have solidity. Brush strokes cannot mean anything unless they are carving out form, and this is the basis of good draftmanship. It is the difference between a feeling of reality and just empty "marks on paper,"—fudging to get an effect.

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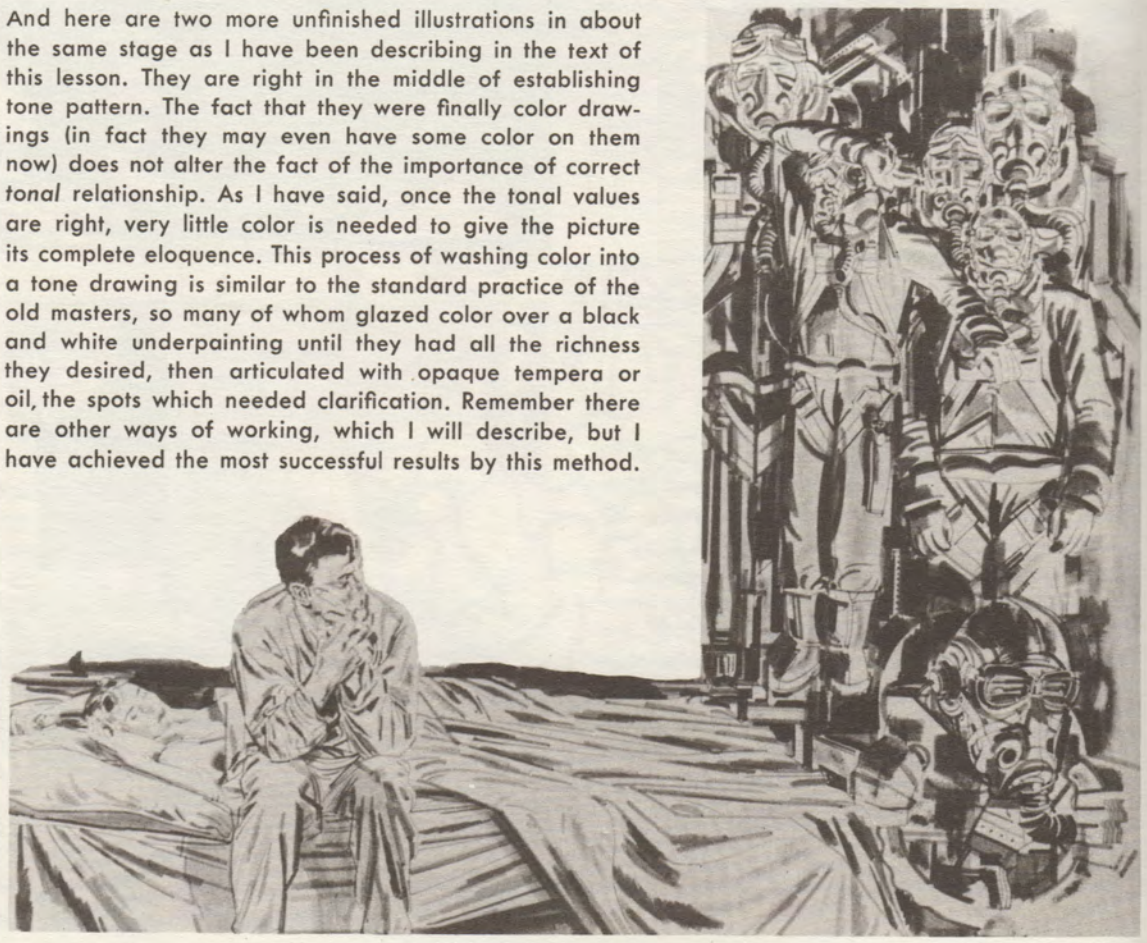
And here are two more unfinished illustrations in about the same stage as I have been describing in the text of this lesson. They are right in the middle of establishing tone pattern. The fact that they were finally color drawings (in fact they may even have some color on them now) does not alter the fact of the importance of correct *tonal* relationship. As I have said, once the tonal values are right, very little color is needed to give the picture its complete eloquence. This process of washing color into a tone drawing is similar to the standard practice of the old masters, so many of whom glazed color over a black and white underpainting until they had all the richness they desired, then articulated with opaque tempera or oil, the spots which needed clarification. Remember there are other ways of working, which I will describe, but I have achieved the most successful results by this method.



The above illustration for a *Post* story is a fairly complicated one and could easily have gotten out of hand without plenty of preliminary work. I think it came out fairly well, but it was very necessary to be able to envision a floor plan, and see the figures in all their solidity to keep it under control. I do not minimize the importance of the original conception, the decision to have the large curtain dominate the picture. This was the mental image which occurred to me as I read the manuscript, and my first doodle proved that it would work.

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The importance of preliminary work

It is sometimes good to reduce your problem to these simple terms if you want to clarify things in your own mind. It may prevent surprises later. This was done in pencil on tracing paper.

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The second stage

1 I have chosen at random these four photos which I had in my studio. They bear no relationship to each other whatsoever but they will serve as well as any photos for the purpose. With these, I will start an illustration. Of course, you already know that this is *not* the way I would ordinarily go about it. I repeat, this is just a *technical diagram* and you should study it as such.

An exercise in picture organization

Here is a diagram which demonstrates one more way to think about the structure of a picture. This is just a technical exercise which, if it gets over a point, will have served its purpose. I have exaggerated the steps to emphasize a way of thinking. Picture organization is a difficult thing to demonstrate. Most people call it "composition" but I prefer the term with wider connotations. The word "composition" suggests to me something that can be learned and then applied indiscriminately while "picture organization" is just that from start to finish.

2 Here, I have arranged the four figures in position so that they are related and make sense in a "story" way. The postures and action suggest a "three to one" division, with a remark being made by the figure holding the siphon to the relaxed, cocky figure on the right. Here, they are in the position they should occupy—but with no attempt at proportion. In fact, I just traced these proportions from the photographs above.

3 The same figures are shown here in a closer and more accurate relationship to each other. I have used the photos to draw from, exaggerating and proportioning as I went along.

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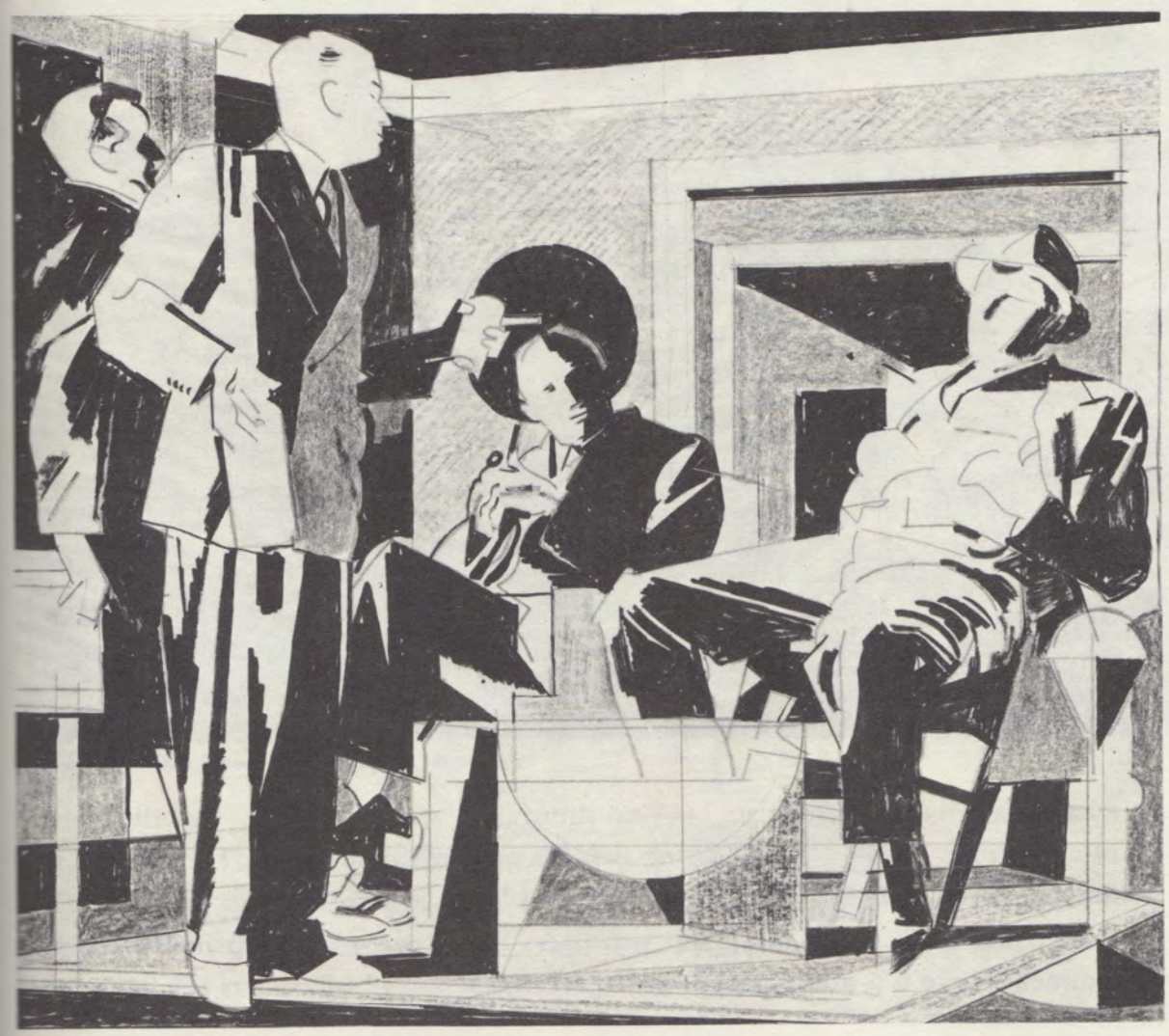

4 Now the figures are the same as on the opposite page but in a rectangle, with the addition of a few geometric shapes suggesting an interior. By the use of these shapes of tone, I think you see that what were four separate figure positions have not only become a design in black and white, but also the structure upon which I could build a solid (though not very exciting) picture. I am not being literal, it is still only an abstract arrangement but, since it holds together fairly well any further stage that I might carry it to would also remain cohesive. A rectangular illustration based on this would not fall apart at the seams. The figure on the right is contained and pointed up by the rectangular framing, while the pointed finger and a head are emphasized by the circle. (In the final drawing this latter could become an oval frame in the wall.) If this sounds like a hard and calculating way to plan a picture, I would remind you that the finished drawing is still to do, and all the grace, freedom and facility of the finish will be enhanced by a solid structure underneath.

5 I will not finish it. I know you get the idea. Just as a technical exercise, try things like this. I'm really only trying to illustrate my *thinking*. This sequence proves that almost anything can become the subject for a picture—it is just a case of putting things in proper relationship to each other.

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The second stage

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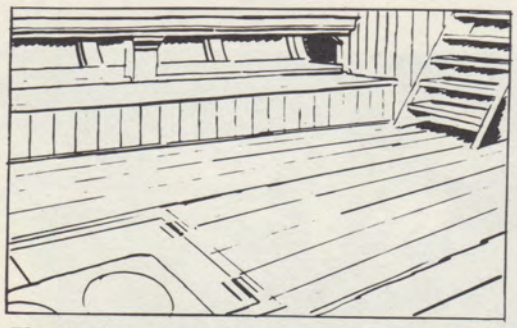
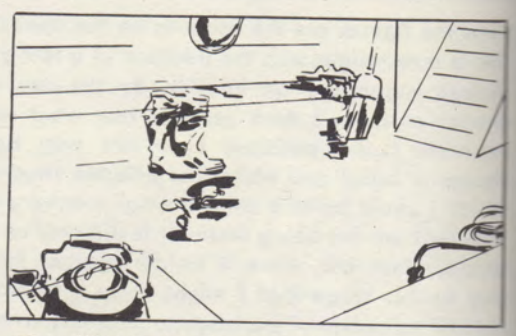
The theatre and illustration

I have spoken of the similarity between illustration and the theatre. This illustration of mine from *The Saturday Evening Post* is a good example of this. The color in this drawing was a dramatic, sombre blue-gray, with one accent of red in the cabin boy's neckerchief. It is a war story and two flyers have been picked up in the English channel. There is a quiet struggle going on over a pair of binoculars the boy covets.



The Set: A low interior of the cabin of an English fishing trawler. Uncomfortable, low bunks at the side, a wooden companionway leading up on top and the wooden planking of the deck with a trap door—all largely imaginary.

The Characters: Two flyers, covered with blankets, and the cabin boy of the trawler. The action is slight. In his effort to take the binoculars, the boy's hands are held in the death grip of the flyer. Of course, the placing and patterning of this cast of characters is not an obvious arrangement, but foreshortening the lower figure, and allowing the man (upper left) to go out of the picture was necessary for dramatic effect.



The "Props": Some of these were mentioned in the story, others seemed to be called for to add atmosphere and "place" the scene. Not many readers would have seen the inside of a fishing trawler, and the sea boots, "sou'wester," broom and tea kettle seemed to add something. Perhaps the scene is still not obvious, but I am a great believer in the subtle approach, making the page flipper stop and take a second look in order to correctly identify the picture. I believe that if he takes this trouble he will next look at the title, and then perhaps start reading. Only then have we performed our function as illustrators.

How I make a picture

by R.F. ROBERT FAWCETT

lesson 5

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Westport, Connecticut

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Robert Fawcett

2 The Alamo

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Brush and lampblack on tracing paper.

The Alamo

Having broken up my procedure so far into technical stages, let us review the whole process at this time before considering other aspects of commercial and illustrative art. For this purpose I have selected one example, my Alamo picture, and we will go through the making of this painting from beginning to end. I will be as frank as possible and give you both sides of the picture, the happy and the less happy. You will see that drawing is not *all* fun, although most illustrators would not trade their profession for any other.

An assignment does not start when you sit down at your drawing board and begin looking for your favorite scribbling pencil. Much usually happens before that, especially in the case of a fairly important assignment such as the one we are about to consider.

This job was outlined roughly to me over the telephone and, after a minor haggle over price (minor because I was determined to do the drawing anyway) I received the layout by mail. It was a large rectangle, indicating a spread of color across two pages for a magazine which always gives its pictures good reproduction. They wanted my interpretation of the Alamo incident for an issue devoted to Texas. Nothing was indicated in the space, so the problem was mine alone. I did not even have a manuscript to which to refer. I had only to produce an arresting picture, correct in detail, an imaginative interpretation of the battle as it must have occurred early in the nineteenth century.

Now the Alamo incident has been pictured many times, and each picture has been an imaginative reconstruction. For my guidance, reproductions of some of these earlier pictures accompanied the layout. It was amazing how much these differed in essential facts. The artists apparently went to whatever sources of information were available to them at the time and invariably came up with differing interpretations. Either that or they invented freely.

In looking over the "scrap" which was sent to me by the magazine, I found, in three different pictures, three different Texas flags flying from the Alamo. The cos-

tumes of the Mexican army ranged from almost Napoleonic completeness, to the sombrero and chaps of the Mexican peon which has become almost a symbol. It was obvious that I had a lot more research to do. An able assistant visited the New York Public Library and obtained information which seemed to be authentic and which corroborated at least some of the many pictures I had been given for reference.

I had drawn this Alamo incident some years before and I was embarrassed to learn that my earlier version contained a few errors which could have been avoided at the time by more extensive research. However, no one, as far as I know, wrote in and questioned my accuracy at the time, for which I am grateful.

I was also able to unearth some movie stills of the incident and these seemed to contain fairly authentic Mexican army costumes. However, I am wary of accepting even these as the last word after an incident which happened to me in Hollywood. During a visit to one of the larger studios I was talking with the woman who was in charge of all research. I told her of the great value we illustrators placed in movie stills as sources of historical reference. We assumed, I said, that the research facilities of the moving picture industry were much greater than our own and we therefore relied heavily on this research for accuracy. She replied that, on the contrary, if a picture had appeared in a magazine such as *The Saturday Evening Post, that* constituted authority enough for them! I left her, pondering uneasily on the extent to which the halt have been leading the blind these many years!

In a picture like this one, authenticity, although important, should never take precedence over *spirit*. I knew that there were no Texas survivors who had witnessed the incident. Certainly no correspondents or photographers were present to challenge the conception of contemporary artists. Only the Alamo building itself still stands in San Antonio which, except for the ordinary ravages of time, looks now as it did then.

Finally I assembled all the available pictures and diagrams of the battle with penciled historical notes on the incident and decided on the costumes which were most probably authentic. I show you how I proceeded with a fat, black pencil and a sketch pad to "think" on the point of view I would take for my picture. The previous interpretation of mine was of little help because that had been an upright rectangle and the composition accommodated itself to that. The new one was two pages wide and shallow, and therefore called for a different concept entirely.

Reproduced here are my first rough sketches and also the final sketch which was sent to the magazine for approval. You will see that even this final one underwent a lot of revision. However, keeping the Alamo building on the right, spreading the courtyard full of struggling figures right across the two pages, and showing the large symbolic figure of the falling defender seemed to be the very best ways to encompass as much of the scene as possible.

When the approved sketch was returned, I had it photostated up to the working size and started the tracing and the retracing which I have described earlier, refining the details, correcting the drawing and fitting things in with greater and greater spatial economy. I finally arrived at what seemed a good workable tracing for the action and the figures.

Brush and lampblack
on tracing paper.

Reproduced actual size.

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4 The Alamo

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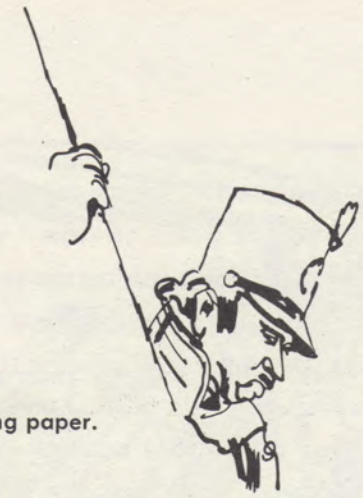


Pen and ink on tracing paper.

I know from experience, however, that a good line pattern does not always result necessarily in an equally good tone and color pattern. Although this picture was, in a way, diagrammatic in that the action must be followed, the "picture" qualities which make people stop, look and read had to be developed, and in large measure disguise the *factual* aspects. Much still had to be left undecided for later stages—the sky area, for instance.

I traced the final version down onto my board and began my ink rendering with a brush, a method which I have described in detail in a previous lesson, and which I point out in the captions beside each picture. While doing this, I took numerous photographs of the drawing in progressive stages. These photographs of the work at various stages and close-ups of parts are reproduced here, although actually, after working on the drawing for three days, I thought that it had gotten out of hand. This is a queer experience, but I knew that I could never, in my state of mind then, pull the picture through to my satisfaction. I finally discarded what I had done and started the rendering all over again on a new board.

I show you the new rendering at the same stage I reached when I discarded the first one. I point out that, despite the similarity, there is a greater solidity in the composition, and I had greater confidence in the final outcome.

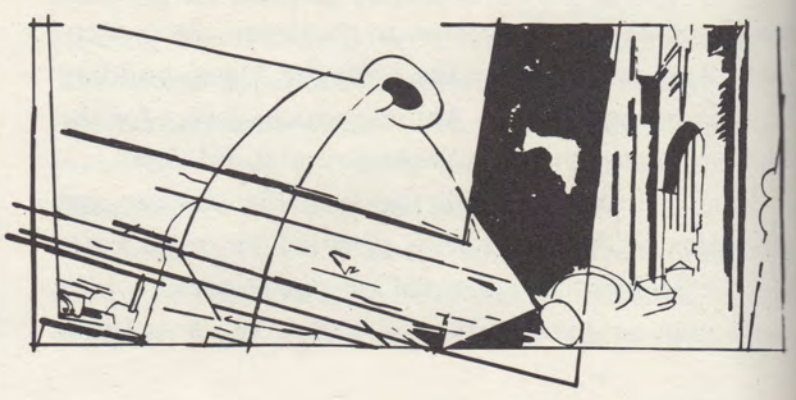
The completion of the drawing required two days or more during which I slowly felt my way, abstractly, from tone to color. Tensions in the picture were created and relaxed. Color was heightened or lessened until things looked right. As usual, I employed the dyes and colored inks, later using opaques and casein tempera.

The sky area was difficult because it would not look right, it seemed to me, to have a placid sky over such a chaotic struggle. It would have been contradictory, somehow. Evening seemed to suggest itself and the threatening storm developed almost unconsciously. I found myself emphasizing the downward movement of figures and lines from left to right (see diagram below) against the upright forms of the Alamo on the right, and in the sky the transition from comparative calm on the left to the storm at the right was accomplished more or less gracefully with the help of the flag and the falling hat of the large figure.

A picture like this is not an illustration in the commonly accepted sense because it is an impersonal one. The subject was "The Alamo"—just that. If it had been, for instance, "Davy Crockett at the Alamo," which it could have been if I had decided to make it that, then the figure of Crockett would have dominated a scene which would have done little more than act as a frame.

The conception makes it impersonal except insofar as I delineated characters toward the end. Actually this was the last thing I did—and it probably is the first thing for which you will look. If the reader asked himself, "Who can he mean that to be?" (for the desire to recognize is primary in most people), then I let him draw his own conclusions. This is called "audience participation" and should heighten the interest of the onlooker. However, the qualities which I designed to make him stop and look twice I have described to you in this "peek behind the scenes." It is all the difference between a professional and amateur discussion.

This "Alamo" drawing took about eight days to complete from the start of the first sketches to the finish.



The evolution of the picture

I am going to throw all this stuff at you and comment on each illustration as we go along. In a way, it is a resume of what we have been considering up to this point. I have taken photos of the picture in progress and I let you see them because I cannot imagine any experience more revealing of my way of thinking and working. I show you the whole thing—some stages which should, by right, go into the trash basket, and others which I am sure reveal that we all have periods when we grope blindly, and have to force ourselves to fight it through.

Right away you miss the color doodle, the miniature picture I made so important in lesson No. 1. You are right, I did not make a doodle for this. I started in scratching with a big soft pencil until something started to jell. Some rules are made to be broken. But let us take it in sequence.

Courtesy Liberty Magazine

1 First, here is the Alamo drawing I made some years ago for *Liberty* magazine. It did not look too good to me when I first dug it up, but I still like an architectural quality it contained. I had gone to some research at the time and the reconstruction of the last ditch fight had a vigor, a monumental feeling which was not *wholly* nauseating to see after a few years. Ordinarily, I think it is a good sign to be able to greet one's earlier work with disgust, or at least with impatience. It should be a sign of progression, though of course, this is not always the case. I find that I often have a great desire to do things over, and a regret that many old proofs may have found their way to other's scrap files. In this case, although my present problem was of the same subject, it required an entirely new concept, (as I was soon to find out).

2 Here I have even taken a picture of a lot of the "scrap" I was able to dig up and study before I started thinking about my new version. In the center, if you can see it, is a photo of an old painting of the incident. It is panoramic and the figures look like ants, but it proved to be extremely valuable to me. I was able to reconstruct the whole battle from this picture, to see how the Alamo was defended and how it was attacked and finally overcome. I knew I could use all the "information" this contained, that my final point of vantage would eliminate much that was here depicted. This panorama is really a kind of relief map, accurate and descriptive but completely lacking in emotional content. Further to the right is a photo of the Alamo as it is today, and partly hidden are a picture of Davy Crockett, old prints in which I found such a diversion of opinion and stills from movies which were also contradictory. Finally you see the pencilled notes of an assistant, who very exhaustively consulted historical books in the library and came up with a diagram of what is recognized as the authoritative flag which hung from the Alamo on that day. The flag in my *Liberty* version, I found, was wrong, but even so, I thought the Lone Star flag would be less likely to be questioned than the one which research finally proved to be the right one.

3 Here are scribbled notes of some of the contradictory data — flags and Mexican hats. You see how different they all are — not a nice situation to be faced with when I know that my own version must be as non-controversial as possible. I finally settled on the uniforms shown in the movie stills, as they seemed to be corroborated by early prints.

Robert Fawcett

The Alamo

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4 Now I have absorbed as much data as I think I need. This kind of thing can be carried too far and, if I allow it to influence me to excess, the result will be a stiffening up — atrophy of the imagination. So I start in scribbling with a large soft pencil on a tracing pad. At first, I played with the idea of another "roof" scene. It would obviously never have worked — the space is a horizontal one, and this splits the picture in half. I continued scribbling for a while but then gave it up — too much about it I didn't like.

5 The second attempt was a panorama. I had a fleeting thought that maybe a stiff, archaic rendering in minute detail would be an idea. An unemotional panoramic view of the scene crowded with detail but somehow remote from tragedy, like a model or a diorama. The idea intrigued me, but I decided it was too unlike my usual style and might not be accepted with sufficient enthusiasm by my client. Interesting thing to do, though — just see how detached one could be, model everything round and smooth in placid, genial sunlight. I scribbled and speculated for a while, then gave the idea up for another try.

6 I then placed myself beside the barricade on the right and saw two figures struggling with Alamo facade behind, Mexicans coming over the barricade, others scaling the opposite wall with ladders, confusion and conflict in the middle. It was the start of something but seemed like too much Alamo showing and not dramatic enough. I didn't want it to be an architectural drawing at the expense of drama. Still, the large foreground figures dominating the scene held my interest.

7 I moved my position until I was further around and behind the barricade looking in. This way I got a nice foreshortened view of the building, and if I had been a news photographer at the scene this is where the action would have been really hot. I didn't waste much time on this but proceeded on to the next for I knew I was on the track of something.

8 Here it starts to jell. This view seems to give me the greatest scope, and the Mexican soldiers are dominant, as they actually were in numbers. The large foreground figure using a bayonet typifies this. The flag coming in from above, the walls beyond and obstruction in front, place the scene as outside the courtyard of a church, within which a death struggle is taking place. The defenders are slowly being forced to retreat into the church itself. I'm still using the large soft pencil with a fat lead and stabbing away to achieve my effects, not stopping to do any accurate drawing. These are done very fast, one after another, purposely violent and free. They constitute the most creative thinking in the whole job for, after this, it is a case of refining and implementing.

Robert Fawcett

The Alamo

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9 The final sketch in black crayon with a suggestion of color rubbed in, which went to the client for o.k. I finally decided that the largest foreground figure should be a Texan and I placed him right in front of the Mexican. His relaxed falling figure symbolizes the failure of the defense. Based on my last rough scribble I have gone into some detail in the battle scene beyond, but I have tried everywhere to *suggest* rather than *portray*. There is not too much of the stockade and rope in the front — just enough so we know it is there. A hand gripping a wrist on the left, a dead Mexican's head with hat awry, a foot hanging on the rope — all these are small details whose eloquence suggests much more than is actually said. Things like this are much more interesting than an attempt to show everything. You remember what I have said about the elimination of dead areas. If a hand and wrist say "two figures in a struggle" as well as if I had drawn them completely, then all the rest would have been unessential — to me, a dead area. You may wonder why all this concern for spatial economy when I have large areas of empty sky, but that creates contrast. The opposition of varying texture gives the picture an interest it would not otherwise have. These things are the artist's concern. This is the *technique* by which he creates and conveys a mood. Sometimes it comes about by "using the old noodle," more often it is felt, and when it is felt the layman or reader feels it also. You notice that I have marked the center of the picture where it will be cut by the gutter in the magazine. My thought here was to try to create one over-all scene which would be composed of two separate pictures, a difficult thing to do, in which I was not wholly successful. But I still think the attempt was worth the trouble — much better than ignoring the gutter and then being surprised and horrified when the picture is cut in half at an embarrassing place, (right through the head of the main figure, for instance).

Actual size detail. ➡

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10 When the sketch came back from the magazine for the finish, I had a photostat made of it enlarged from twenty one inches up to thirty five inches wide — a little more than one-half up. Tracing over the photostat, I produced the above, which goes into more detail, fits things together tighter, and considers parts of drawing which I have ignored up to now. This is the time when I look at all my reference material carefully to be sure that details are as authentic as I can make them. I washed in some tone areas on the tracing paper to be sure I was kept aware of the movement of the whole *picture* and did not become too immersed in detail. I moved the photostat underneath ever so slightly to change the position of a head or an object, fitting together so that I would not have any surprises later. There will be enough, there always are, so that to be able to side-step some is all to the good. This, then, is the tracing, worked to the actual size of my drawing — a process of refining and amplifying, and under this I slipped another sheet blackened with lead and rubbed, and proceeded to trace it down onto a sheet of hot pressed Whatman board, Imperial size.

11 Here it is traced down. All the essential lines are expressed with a maximum of vigor, sometimes exaggeration, so that a minimum of spirit is lost. The picture area is bounded with masking tape with one-quarter of an inch added to top and each side for "bleed."

Robert Fawcett

The Alamo

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12 Now I start my finished drawing in black, waterproof ink with a little sepia ink added to give my black a slight dilution and warmth. I start off with the main figure. (You see I have given him authentic buckskins rather than the modern pants and vest he had in the sketch). I try to draw freely for, as I have explained, it is always easy to tighten up later — impossible to loosen up. I draw rhythmically, allowing the brush to make shapes which give the figure movement, accentuating the natural rhythm of the figure itself. This is also a hangover of a stylized kind of drawing I was doing some years ago when I did more historical pictures than I am called upon to do now. Historical drawings, especially of early American subject matter, always suggest the woodcut to me, and this rhythmic brush rendering is a hangover from that. You see that I progress from the main figure to the one beyond him, then to the next two to the left, trying to *knit them together* into a cohesive pattern rather than separating them. This is very important. A drawing of this complexity could too easily end up as an uncoordinated mass of small details if one is not careful and that kind of thing is difficult to look at. The observer is visually irritated but does not know why, and so, by trying at the outset to hold things together, I hope to achieve some kind of repose even with subject matter which does not seem to require it.

13 You see here in this diagram how objects form a leaning pyramid, and how this complements and supports the opposing curved pyramid of the figures. In the final drawing, this became modified somewhat but it is still there and serves the same purpose.

Robert Fawcett

The Alamo

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14 Detail of the right side, showing the Alamo facade. I had no data on this except a photograph from the opposite side which you may be able to detect in the "scrap" plate. I had to reconstruct this view in perspective (on my tracing) and in rendering it here, I drew by light (Lesson No. 3), imagining a low sun on the left, shining straight at it. I have started drawing the defenders in front of the door in some detail, which I can do because I know the over-all picture construction is underneath and they will not get out of hand. I don't hesitate, in this stage, to add figures or objects — drawing right over what is already there if necessary.

15 A detail from the last stage. If you want a close look, here it is.

16 Another detail from the last stage.

17 For a lot of this architecture, I use a flat, chisel sable about half an inch wide. It makes me think solidly and design simply, blocking things out as though I were actually building the thing. I'm still employing that waterproof black warmed with sepia and I am not hurrying to the finish stage. Each step has to be considered separately and carried out thoroughly, a slow methodical process which is why it is fairly simple to demonstrate for you.

18 Here I have put in the defiant figure at the base of one of the pillars. He fits in there solidly, there are enough verticals and horizontals to tie him in with the architecture. That broken gun or club being wielded by the character just a little to the left is going to have to be changed. Now it parallels some door moulding, but I prefer it as a horizontal. Otherwise I just move about the drawing, sometimes putting in figures and other documentation, at other times organizing what I have into more architectural shapes. (Now I am talking of picture architecture, not the architecture of the building itself.)

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The Alamo

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19 Another close-up detail, just to show how far I go at this stage. It also shows you how coarsely I sometimes work, with a blunt brush, hacking things out as though with a hatchet. It is not very pretty to look at but I think it might be useful to see. It will be easy to refine later on, but a lot of it I will leave as crude as it is now. It all depends on how I feel about it as I progress.

20 A little later this is how it looked. I am moving around and methodically putting in what seems to be called for. The tight group on the left is pretty well set, also the fallen Mexican on the cannon and the head of the one beside him. I am still working rhythmically and with an eye to the finished effect, which I know will be in color. Although this is really a line pattern, it is also a painted line in that I am dividing up areas between light and shadow. It is not a mechanical rendering of the single line underneath, rather it is an *improvisation* upon that line (as I explained to you in detail in Lesson No. 3).

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The Alamo

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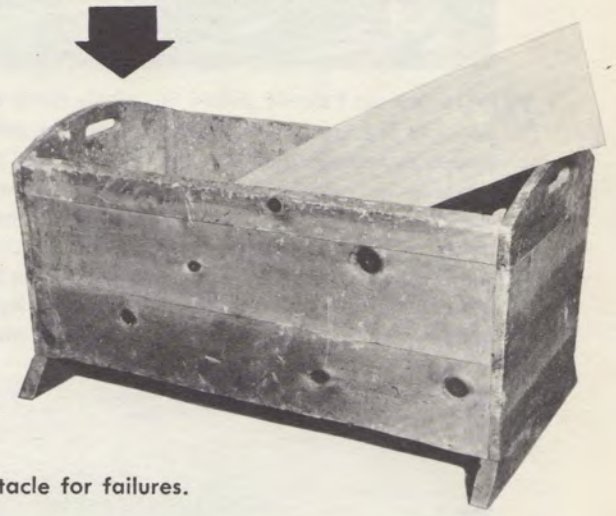
21 What happened here I don't exactly know. It was going along fairly well and then suddenly started to deteriorate (above). At least I thought it did, and I came to a sudden decision to re-do everything I had done. I don't know how these things happen to me, or whether they are even justified. If I had put this aside for a day and then came back to it fresh, I might easily have saved it, but I'm telling you what happened, and I did the whole thing over.



Receptacle for failures.

I start a new drawing

22 I changed the position of some figures (the one with the sword behind the main figure — from left to right). I did not bother to photograph the picture in sequence this second time. It was a repetition of the first which we have just gone over, except that everything seems to be drawn with greater emphasis, it designs better, and even the clouds and approaching storm are as architectural and solid as everything else in the picture. It even has a mural-like quality, and I felt happier about it. I show you the makeover in exactly the same stage as the first one in step 21. You may not feel it was worth the trouble, but I did (and it was I who had to do all the extra work). This quality in me is known as "perfectionism" and is viewed by some with suspicion.

Robert Fawcett

14 The Alamo

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23 From then on I slowly pulled the whole thing together. When I had gone as far as I could with transparent color (inks and dyes) I turned to opaque tempera. With this I could highlight, model, lose edges — in fact the drawing took on a new dimension. Only by close comparison can you see how I used the tempera, but in the stormy sky you notice how the forms were changed, softened and made more dramatic, with only a minor loss of solidity. The group defending the door was focalized by the light of the setting sun, and the uprights of the columns. I used no models or figure photographs at all on this job. I was occasionally influenced by some action in the scrap I consulted, but this was minor. I kept a mirror in my studio fairly busy, posing in front of it for bits of movement, but a picture like this has to come more or less from inside oneself. It may not be perfect but I think it demonstrates a kind and an amount of thinking and planning which not everybody is aware of. I hope the labor involved is not too discouraging. I don't know of any shortcuts which bring the same results.

Holiday

24 I finally photographed the finish on the easel in my studio. Just to conclude, unless my client is being unusually reticent and considerate, no experts have appeared to challenge the authenticity of details. We did receive one polite letter asking for clarification on the Mexican uniforms, and this was as politely, and I hope satisfactorily, answered. With this lesson you have received a color reprint of the finished picture as it appeared in the magazine.

How I make a picture

by R.F. ROBERT FAWCETT

lesson 6

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Robert Fawcett

2 Line drawing

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In a violent scene like this, the technique reflects the mood. Everything is moving and chaotic, and the light direction (from below) hints that the enemy ship is burning. There are few, if any, horizontal or parallel lines which might detract from the confusion and introduce a suggestion of order. A drawing like this is planned carefully, then drawn quite fast and with freedom, using white along with the lampblack. (A casein white is more opaque than the usual water color white.) It can be used freely and worked over with black — back and forth. When I say "planned carefully," I mean that it went through the usual tracing paper rough and over-tracing for refinement before being transferred to the paper.

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Line drawing

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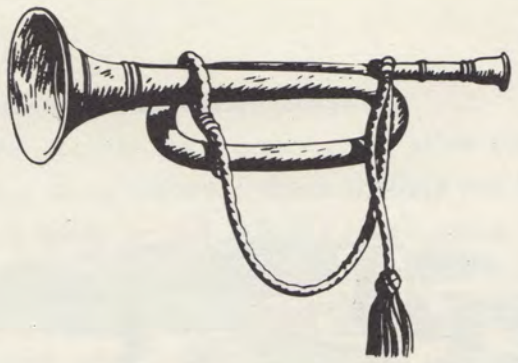

Foreword

I feel the necessity of taking a few moments to discuss some aspects of this course and your reception of them. With Lesson 5, we recapitulated what had gone before by going through an assignment of mine from beginning to end, the Alamo drawing. It seemed to cover a technical method comprehensively.

I have, however, a feeling that you are more than a little disappointed by the points I have seen fit to concentrate on so far. I believe them to be the important things, but I am sure some students are surprised that what they hoped would be an exposition of "technique" (manual manipulation) has instead become a constant warning that manual manipulation is of little or no importance. You have been treated to an exposé of my *thinking* and the manifestations of this thinking on paper. I have tried to be open with you in endeavoring to find a way to make this course of the utmost value. I have searchingly examined my own mental as well as technical processes. This has involved showing you diagrams, preparatory work and my mistakes and failures along with the results which I find moderately passable. Only in this way, it seems to me, does my experience become of any real value to you. Inasmuch as these are the facts, I will not distort them by making it seem different, or deceive you into believing that the result is as casual or automatic as it sometimes appears.

I have found from experience that the average student often lacks a humility and modesty that I find in my more mature and successful colleagues. I know of none of the latter who does not fret and worry after delivering a picture until a telephone call from the client reassures him that it has been well received. Not one of those who are admired within the profession is content with his accomplishments or willing to rest on his laurels and repeat a formula. They constantly look for new horizons, new methods and outlooks – broadening and thereby growing. Although each new advance means the rejection of much facility that they may have laboriously acquired, I do not observe them trying to retain this as doggedly as does the average student who has far *less* technical equipment and therefore *less to lose.*

So many seem to forget that we are all students together and that no one can afford to stand up and pontificate. The best teaching, it always seems to me, is that of sharing experience, with those of fuller experience temporarily holding the floor.

My reason for this interlude at this time is to urge you again to try to break loose from rigid patterns, to examine what I try to make clear without necessarily recognizing an immediate application to your work. Too many try to use a course like this as a means of acquiring a few technical tricks which they hope to add to a technique they already have (and jealously protect), and by so doing, fail to gain the most important and valuable thing it might offer – namely, a new outlook, a fresh experience.

Those of you who are already employed in some branch of illustration should try to absorb this as far as possible as a spare time activity, not looking for an *immediate* improvement in the work you do professionally, but rather as something which might slowly germinate (perhaps long after the course is finished). Certainly the response to the assignments will gain in comprehension if they can be completely divorced from the bread-and-butter stuff we are called upon to do at different times.

Some students bring work which they have been selling for a number of years. It is sadly lacking in draftsmanship and is rooted in no cultural background. They have always considered it "a living" but now it is becoming increasingly difficult to market. What they say, in effect, is "this is what I have been doing, but now I find that it is a little out of date. I think that a course of instruction would enable me to pep it up with a few 'modern' concepts of illustration which will show an immediate improvement in my income."

They are a little dismayed when I suggest that, for them, any kind of "post graduate" study like this could be termed "professional psycho-therapy," which should be approached without reservation. If it seems to involve a greater revolution in, or re-evaluation of their own work than they are willing to risk, they should really stay away from it, because new ideas, if they are interesting, have a way of refusing to be confined.

You may recognize this as true, yet still find you are incapable of breaking loose from habits. I hope you will try, because when I title a lesson with a technical designation, (as this one on "Line Drawing") I know that it is partially a convenient term – a come-on – and that the "picture idea" is the only really important thing. This will be stressed over and over again. Even when I *try* to keep the discussion on the technical level that I think you expect and might enjoy, I am not able to do so for long, because I recognize that the technique is dictated by something else of greater value.

The basis of this "picture" concept that I describe is *good drawing*. This is the finest kind of self development which it is never too late to start. Beginning with the next lesson, I include a six part section on pure drawing, what it is, what it does for you and how to go about it. It is an introduction to training an accurate eye and hand.

RF.

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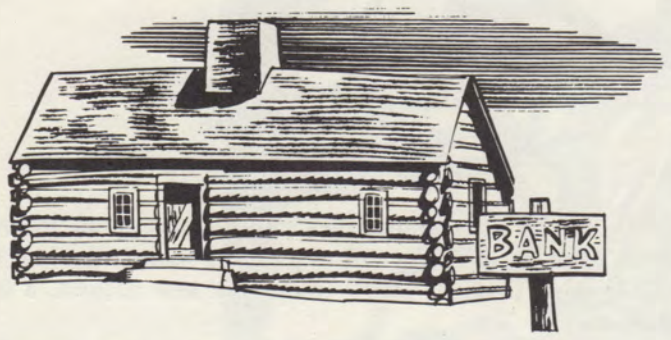
Line drawing



Drawing for Line Reproduction

In this lesson, we will consider an interesting medium, the line drawing. You already know that my whole process of working has, underneath it, a basis of line. However, the "line drawing" we are discussing here is one intended to be reproduced by making a line engraving from it, or by a similar process. It is devoid of all tone except that which can be achieved or simulated with black lines and dots.

As I remarked in a preceding lesson, I rarely use pen and ink for my line drawings. I prefer a brush and lampblack, a water color black. This medium has a slightly sticky texture with which I like to work. It is less "slippery" than ink. Using a brush, as I must with lampblack, provides line with a far greater variety of texture. The only difficulty is in making corrections with white. The black beneath will come up if one is not careful.

Remember that in line drawings the range is from pure black to pure white, and the intervening tones must be achieved in some manner within such limitations. Either small dots or fine lines will produce a gray. With experience, you will become so absorbed in producing an effect of tone that you will not be conscious of how you do it.

Let me emphasize one point, here and now. No matter how adept you become in the line technique, in the final analysis, the presence of the same picture qualities which we have been considering all along will make your line drawing successful and exciting. The fact that you are drawing for line reproduction is a mechanical limitation, but your aim should be to achieve the effect of a tone drawing, insofar as possible. Or, to put it another way, you should strive for the quality of *reality,* and reality involves exploiting the medium to the utmost. The most exciting drawing will cover the whole range of tone from pure black to white. Other techniques merely exploit the quality of the line itself — both are useful and legitimate.

Learning to draw in line is rather difficult — not everyone can do it. It requires considerable control, and a confident, sure approach. Study the best line drawings which have been done in the past and you will observe the variety of methods which can and have been used. Edwin Abbey, for example, employed line as tone, using a very fine pen and sensitively feeling his way until he achieved the result he sought. Consequently, great care was necessary in reproducing his drawings because the line was so fine that it was likely to "break down" or fill up in the reproduction.

Daniel Vierge, the great French illustrator of the last century, used his line more economically. He drew sensitively, putting down only what seemed essential, and always with regard to the light falling on the object. This is why his drawings seem to sparkle. His method defies analysis, one can only say that an extremely sensitive observer reduced what he saw to the absolute essentials, and I know of no saner precept to follow.

If I filled this lesson full of examples of fine line drawings of the past, you would only become confused by their variety. I say "of the past" because line drawing was in its prime when it was one of the few which could be reproduced with success. This was before the development of all the mechanical processes of reproduction in use today.

Line drawing today

Today a line drawing is not required because of reproduction limitations, but more because its unique qualities makes a pleasant contrast to the tone and color drawings used so generally. For this reason, "style" is more important than it once was.

My own method of drawing in line stems originally from my study of wood engravings — especially those of Durer. I once enjoyed injecting certain archaic qualities into my work. I have lost much of this desire, but it

has merged with my painting technique until today I feel no differently when I am working in line, except for the knowledge that what I put down will be seen just as I do it. There will be no overtones of color or wash to hide or confuse a piece of drawing which was ill-conceived in the first place.

As I have said, the "picture" approach is the same for making a line drawing as for making a painting in color. I go through the same processes described in a preceding lesson — line doodles, tracings, and finally the same line pattern traced onto the paper. However, I must see the finished picture in my mind with greater clarity than if I were starting a tone or color drawing. The technique of line is less fluid, however much I struggle to achieve greater fluidity.

My approach to line drawing

I begin drawing a design pattern in the same manner which I have described previously, but perhaps with greater emphasis. Angularities and distortions are more pronounced because later modifications will tend to destroy the original vitality. The drawing will emphasize the rhythmic qualities for which the subject matter may seem to call. If it is a "period" subject, a greater degree of wood engraving technique may enter. If it is a contemporary subject, I will be more spontaneous and the effects of light will be more noticeable. The absence or presence of atmosphere seems to have much effect in creating a period or contemporary mood, but, as I said before, there comes a time when these become less important. My style now is less eclectic and adaptable than it was, and I am guided less and less by what I see appearing in front of me, and more and more by what I have thus far failed to realize on paper.

The illustrations that follow may enable you to understand something which it is difficult to tell you in words. You can observe how my own style has changed over a period of several years. This change and development is part of an over-all process of artistic maturing, and if the line technique looks different, it is because I now think about it less. Once I was hampered by my desire for "purity." I felt that the brush with which I started should be the brush with which I must finish. Now I have no qualms whatever. I pick up and use whatever tool seems the easiest, and the variety adds richness to the finished drawing.

I use a fairly good water color sable to start the drawing. Soon, however, the monotony and lack of interest is likely to pall. Then I may become impatient and pick up one of the oil sables pictured in a previous lesson, using it like a chisel to round forms with a graduated edge, or I may even try to draw a rather complicated section with it. The result will not be smooth and slick, but it is often quite interesting.

One of my colleagues whose work I admire, but whose line effects always puzzled me, finally confessed that he often uses an old tooth brush with which to draw. This I have yet to see him do, but the results surely justify the means. So does much experimenting. Be venturesome and resourceful. Try a drawing yourself with an old tooth brush or some other unorthodox tool and see what happens. I cannot tell you how to use a tooth brush because I have not tried it myself — up to now. I doubt whether it would be practical to use in drawing a small passage such as a face, but you certainly will have a line effect which you could not get in any other way.

The great virtue in using a medium which is not too slick for drawing is that it keeps you on the alert. A clumsy instrument sometimes will cause you to think more clearly before you make a mark. You will see your problem broadly — and in the terms of the instrument which you hold in your hand.

There are no "rules"

The more I think about this whole problem, and the more I try to define rules for procedure, the more I realize that I should emphasize this one fact to you. There are no hard and fast rules. The more you look for them as crutches to support you, and the harder you try to produce something which "looks professional" because it follows some procedure which you believe is standard, the more you will stifle your own creative ability.

A good swimming instructor instills confidence in a beginner so that he will venture into a new element without fear. This is an apt simile, because a good art instructor should do the same thing. It is fear which prevents most students from taking the next step, and the next. Breaking down these fears creates greater con-

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Line drawing

fidence and after awhile you are wallowing in the new element as though born to it. Recognition follows, because what you have to sell is the product of confidence.

Your first line drawings will be tentative and timid. You may be proud of them at the moment but you will not be for long. Dissatisfaction is the first step toward progress and if you are forever dissatisfied with what you have done — but not disheartened — you will continue to mature. This may seem like vague philosophizing — but it is true. I used to wonder if I would ever make a drawing which would not bore me a month later. Only recently have I been able to look at a month-old drawing of mine with any comfort. This may be a sign of retrogression, so I must beware of it.

Develop confidence, not conceit

Self confidence is good, but conceit undiluted by constant and searching self-appraisal is the surest way to atrophy. I can demonstrate to you all the techniques in the world, but if you understand and apply what has just been said, you will be able to develop your own.

Another confession I must make is that in my very early years as an illustrator, I often gauged the worth of my work by how closely it resembled the manner of work of some artist I admired at the moment. Now I rarely look to others. Instead I examine myself, and my own last production becomes the thing which I must outdo next time.

I believe that this is a healthy sign. However, it does not rule out the need and desire of the beginner to pattern his work after that of a current success or a past master. But sometimes artists of mature years and experience fall prey to this habit, and then it is a sure sign of inner immaturity. If at the start you desire to develop a style similar to that of some artist whom you admire, go ahead and try.

Do not *copy* him, however. Study his work and find out, not how, but *why* he did what he did. No one is completely original — all of us are the result of influences to which we have been subjected. If you are big enough to absorb and digest these influences, you will grow and mature in art as you do as a person. If you keep your mind open to many sincere viewpoints, and never become insular and constricted, then you should mature as a finer artist. The whole secret seems to lie in the development of a sound emotional digestive system. Art builds on art.

Drawing in line is a restriction, never forget that. However, a *restriction tests your ability to overcome it*. Although I take space in these pages to demonstrate techniques and methods, your drawing is potentially good or mediocre even before it leaves your tracing pad, and you attempt the technique I have explained. That is because — as I continually reiterate — your *concept* dictates your technique, and if your concept is not clear, if it lacks imagination and vision, then no amount of flashy technique will disguise that fact.

So never neglect your preliminary work. No one will see those tracing paper sketches and first tentative scribbles, although during this course I am showing you some of mine which ordinarily go into the wastebasket. I do not display these with any sense of pride, but only because I believe it is of great importance for you to understand that handsome drawings do not appear full blown without often undergoing severe labor pains. If the final product seems to have been achieved with ease and confidence, it usually is because of hours of gestation and preliminary work.

This preliminary work is even more necessary in line drawing than in tone and color, which permit of much revision and second thoughts right up to the end. This line technique requires more precision, and changes are more difficult to make, so never neglect the preliminaries if you expect to be pleased by the finished product.

Explore the medium

Do not neglect the idle doodling in this medium either. The time you take out for sensuous exploration of the medium is time well spent. This is part of development, and a very important part. Fill pages with such stuff, then throw them away and forget them. It was by doing this that I discovered the interesting effects which strange tools could produce. When someone asks, "How did you get that unusual effect?" the best answer I know is, "Just by trying things."

I can make one comment about your work right now. You still do not *draw* well enough. I know this is true, because no one ever has, and there have been some great draftsmen. Drawing is the basis of anything I can

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Line drawing

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Seven by six inches

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tell you about art, because *drawing* is *understanding*. Of one thing you can be certain, if you are having difficulty with your pictures, it is because of insufficient experience in draftsmanship. This is something no one can teach you although you can be guided.

I use a softer and more absorbent drawing surface for these line drawings than I do for the tone and color illustrations, (for which I have been using hot pressed Whatman board) . I find Strathmore illustration board very satisfactory for this. Every student should find these things out for himself, and it will never hurt him to devote some time just to technical experiment. I have described this earlier as a "sensuous exploration of the medium." Be serious in that you try to *realize* something on paper, but inasmuch as it is experiment, do not be timid about it. Remember that the materials are cheap in comparison to the value to yourself of something you may stumble upon. I hesitate to talk about technique, yet I know that this is the student's chief concern. I suppose that if a growing facility with medium creates confidence, as it should, then it will be rewarding. Actually, technique is the final extension of the "picture idea" or conception, and most failures occur when these two are not homogeneous.

Draw, and draw constantly. Anything around you is a potential subject, any object on which your eye rests offers a sufficient reason for drawing it. Those who believe that mechanical devices rule out the necessity for learning to draw are wrong. It is not so, and it never will be so.

A half-tone screen, if blown up large enough, actually becomes a line drawing! I wonder if a comparison between this and the enlarged section of this spot of mine suggests something to you in the way of a different approach to line drawing? I always found the term "line" as applied to drawing suggestive of something hard and unresponsive, and I make this comparison for you just to see if a new idea germinates. The line drawing as I use it can be a very fluid medium, and I think my example demonstrates this. It is a small drawing, about six inches square, and is symbolic of the hands of death reaching out for the pilot of a burning fighter

plane. The hands I have drawn are imaginary, but a posed photograph lighted dramatically might be very useful in a problem like this, so long as the drawing remained expressive *and never became static*. This one is made almost entirely with a sharp oil sable brush used like a chisel. This gives me a greater freedom, for I seem to search out the form I want in an almost *impressionistic* way with this brush. I cannot draw lines, which I dislike doing, for I know what a hard and inexpressive convention they can be. Instead I use any arrangement of dots and textures until the drawing says what I want it to.

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Line drawing

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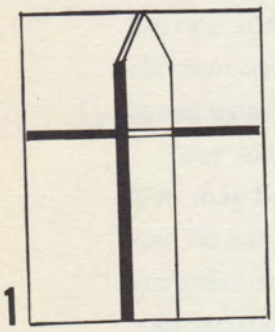
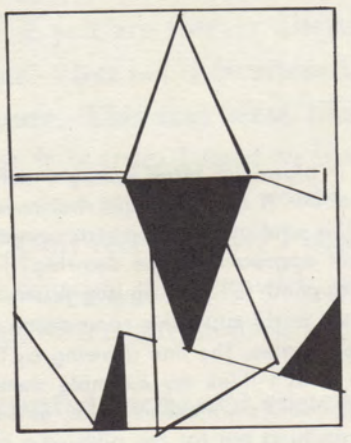
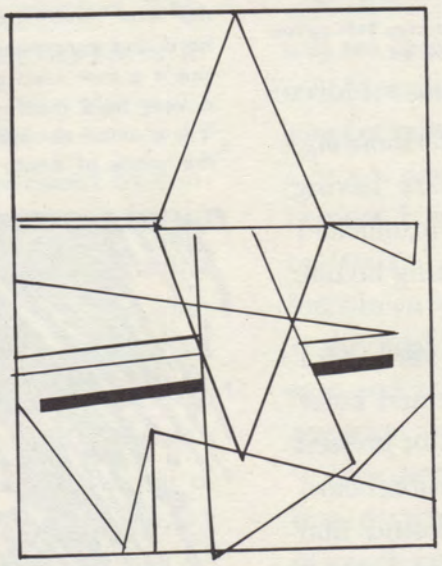


1 This is the first visual idea — the cross. I rarely get myself all mixed up with a lot of irrelevant stuff in the beginning. The cross is, and always will be, a sound structural motive, and the picture idea will grow from it.



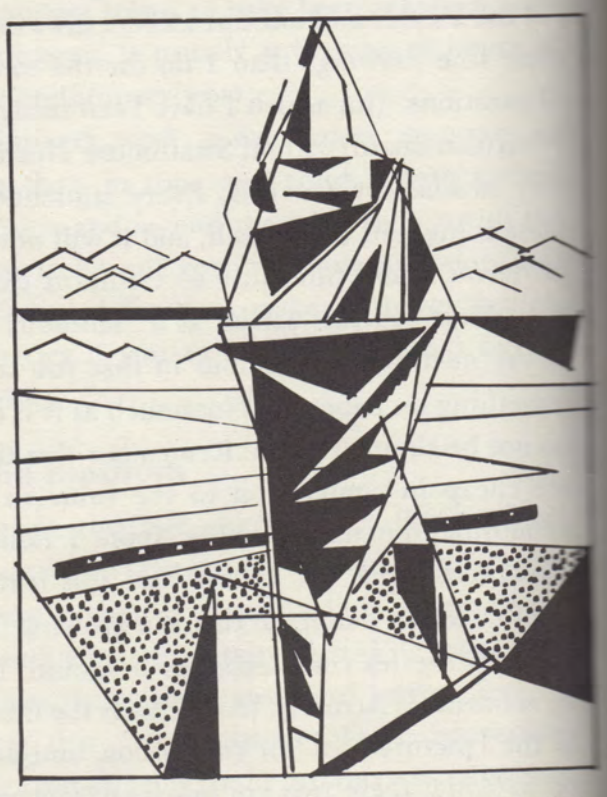
2 First variation of the cross motive. The original remains but is taking different form, that of related triangles. However it is still — *in an abstract way* — structurally sound.



3 The idea of the slow-moving wagon train straggling across the plain below is developed next. I exaggerate its importance here but it seemed a nice idea to place it in the distance, out of earshot, threatened by the observing foreground figure.

The underlying structure again

For me, a test of a successful drawing is how soon I tire of it. This book illustration of an Indian on a rock, gun folded over his arm, looking down on a wagon train is one which I have liked fairly well ever since I did it. Remember this, there is nothing more to these drawings (or any others, come to that) than appears right here, but I will break this one down to show you how it is made. First, of course, is the conception of the Indian on a rock, which was not described in the manuscript. This just occured to me as a dramatic viewpoint, although of course it has been done hundreds of times before.



4 The picture from here on in is an extension of the related angle idea, with the addition of areas of texture. I point out that the first structural idea is still present and still valid. The rest is in the addition of texture which is important for coloration and warmth, but which *would have little meaning without the pictorial architecture I have described.*

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5 For the middle distant trees and distant mountains I used pen line. The transition from foreground to sky had to be done with a certain ingenuity to avoid a hard break at the horizon line. Line drawing is a convention and one's ability to be selective is a constant challenge.

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10 Line drawing

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Again I think that the success or failure of a thing like this depends entirely on the original conception. Here a rider approaches the gate of the town of Pisa, and the rear-end views of horse and man allow me to show his objective also. The baptistry, cathedral and campanile (leaning tower) were drawn from photographs, but their placement was decided upon to complete a pleasing vignette. Cobblestone road, some vegetation and a suggestion of workmen are rendered decoratively — even a few vague marks behind the baptistry (far left) indicate the presence of sailing ships — for I knew that Pisa was in this period a seaport, although it is now ten miles from the sea. The fact that some years ago I went to Pisa helped a lot in this. I remembered that the religious edifices were close to and just inside the walls of the town. But an illustrator cannot have visited every place he is called upon to picture, which is why he needs as complete a scrap file as possible and a folder in it for almost any eventuality. Reproduced actual size.

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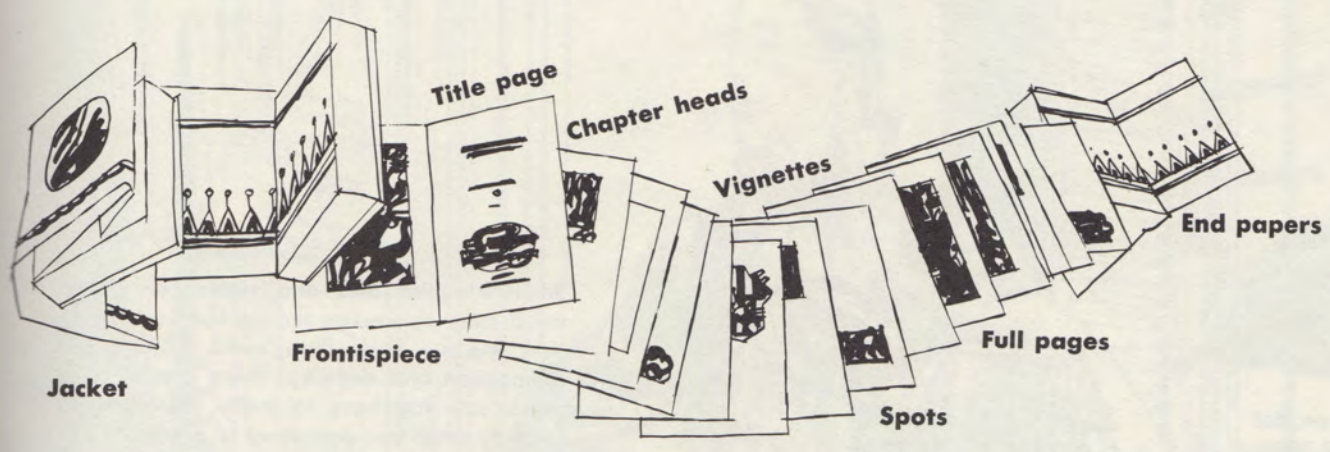
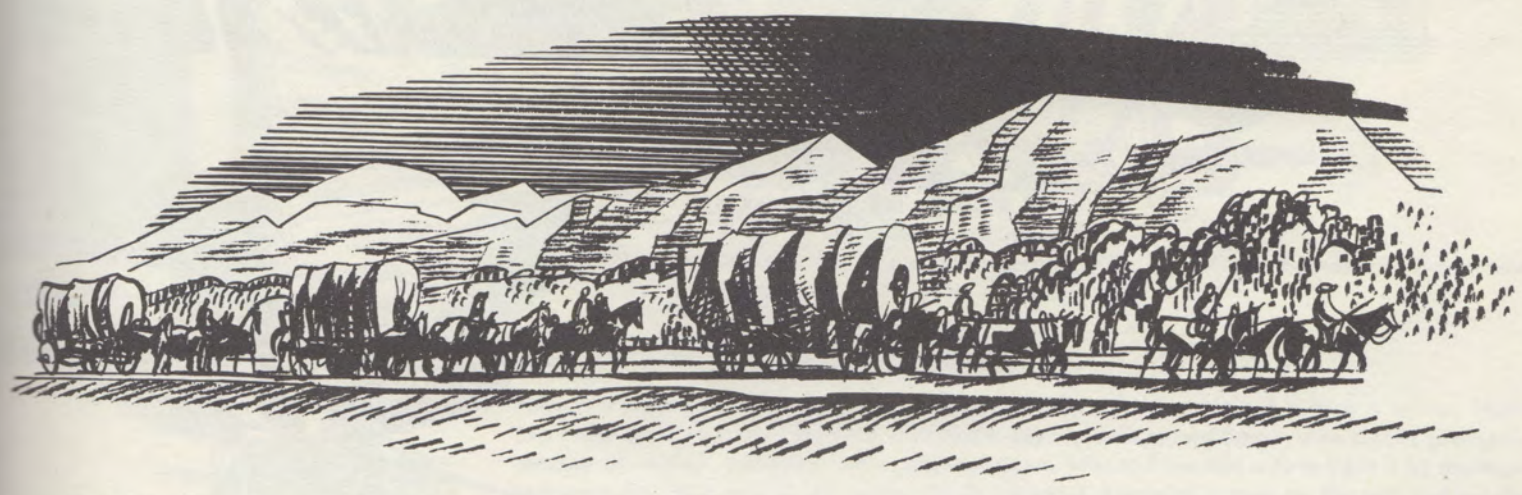


The over-all plan for the illustrated book.

Book illustration is usually the most satisfying kind of illustration from the aesthetic point of view. Unfortunately it is not as remunerative as advertising or periodical illustration, but every illustrator should try to get several good books under his belt during his career, just for the experience. The wise book publisher leaves the artist alone, knowing that the challenge of producing a good book will often result in an enthusiastic absorption in the job, and consequently many more drawings. No illustrator will do a book adequately who does not start out by liking books, who has not steeped himself in the fine productions of the past, or who lacks a knowledge of, or a feeling for, type. Book decoration should be a *total* job, not a group of drawings to be sprinkled throughout the book as the "make-up" man sees fit. A book starts with a jacket and includes the cover and binding, then frontispiece and title page and it often has decorative end papers. Throughout the body of the book, full page drawings, chapter headings and spots may be required, depending on the character of the book. The illustrator must be able to see the thing in its entirety, and then his treatment of each drawing should be governed by an *over-all pattern* of illustration. Most of the drawings I reproduce here would harmonize with the printed type page, because as I have said, my earliest influence was the wood engraving. Despite a more recent "loosening up" and less insistance on "archaism," I believe the influence will always remain. This kind of drawing is eminently adaptable to newspapers, or when a change of pace from process reproduction might attract attention.



A small drawing like this,made for a chapter heading, need not be empty of meaning. This illustrates a train of covered wagons, with riders ahead, moving across a plain surrounded by mountains. The horizontal lines in the sky indicate evening — hence the direction of light shows the train is traveling West. It contains lots of information for a small, line spot. This is known as eloquence in a drawing. It is reproduced actual size.

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12 Line drawing

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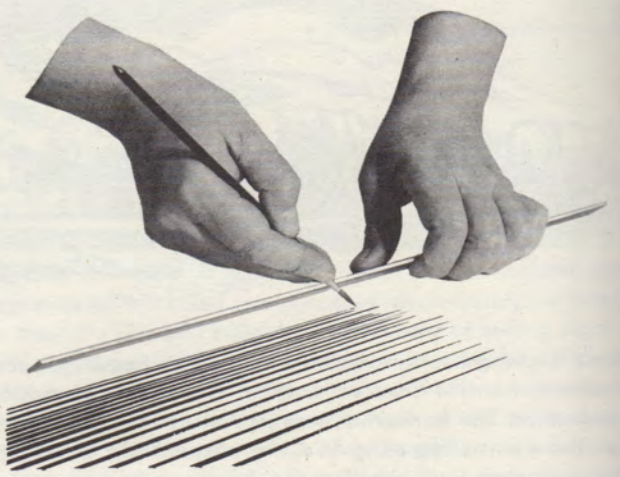
This texture is done with a new, flat sable. The brush is flattened sharp with lampblack and then just laid down lightly on the paper. Now I advise you to forget it before it becomes an obnoxious technical trick!

Small irregular dots and marks can be so much more expressive than a hard unresponsive line — and allow much more subtle delineation and drawing. There are no rules which say you have to make lines, just so long as what you put down is a black mark and not a half-tone (gray). In a drawing like this, you rarely find what is called "an outline." I like to play around freely and spontaneously until the whole thing comes together. Of course, the shape and position of the guitar does not hurt this particular example!

If you wonder how I achieve a line tone, this is how to use a ruler and a brush. The line varies with pressure, and the nail of the third finger rides along the top of the straight edge.



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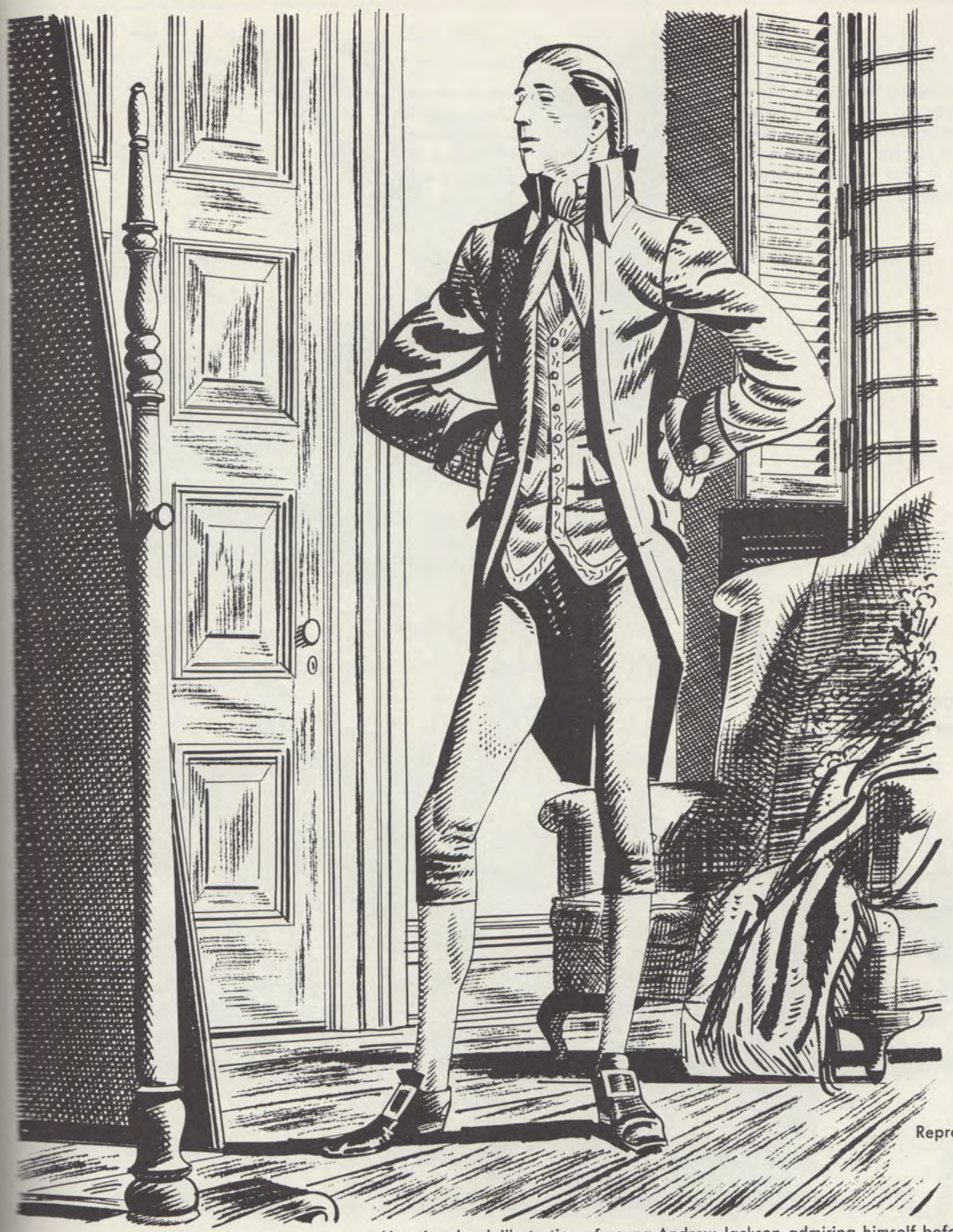

Reproduced actual size.

Here is a book illustration of young Andrew Jackson admiring himself before a mirror. Nothing could be more simple than this—a single, slightly caricatured figure, with simple geometric shapes of mirror, panelled door and windows. Where I needed a tone I got it by mechanical cross hatching until it was of the depth I wanted. I needed a tone on the left, behind the mirror to *support the picture*, and another to accentuate the light side of the figure. It is almost mathematical in its simplicity, yet students too often become confused, and their drawings messy, chiefly because they are side-tracked by irrelevant things.

The woodcut technique can be used with an effect of dramatic light. By imagining what cast light would do to objects whose shape you know, the idea is to contrive a simple decorative convention. The original of this spot is three and a half inches high.

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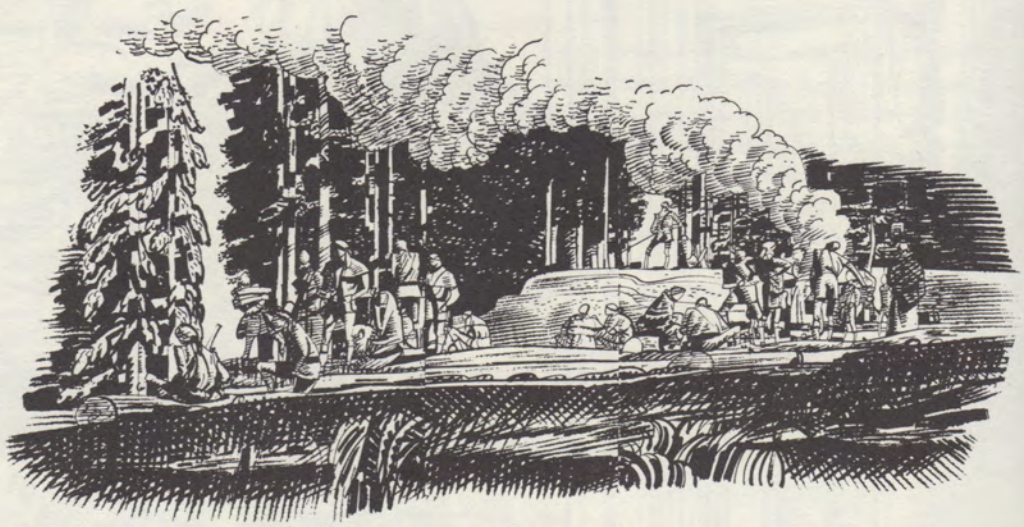
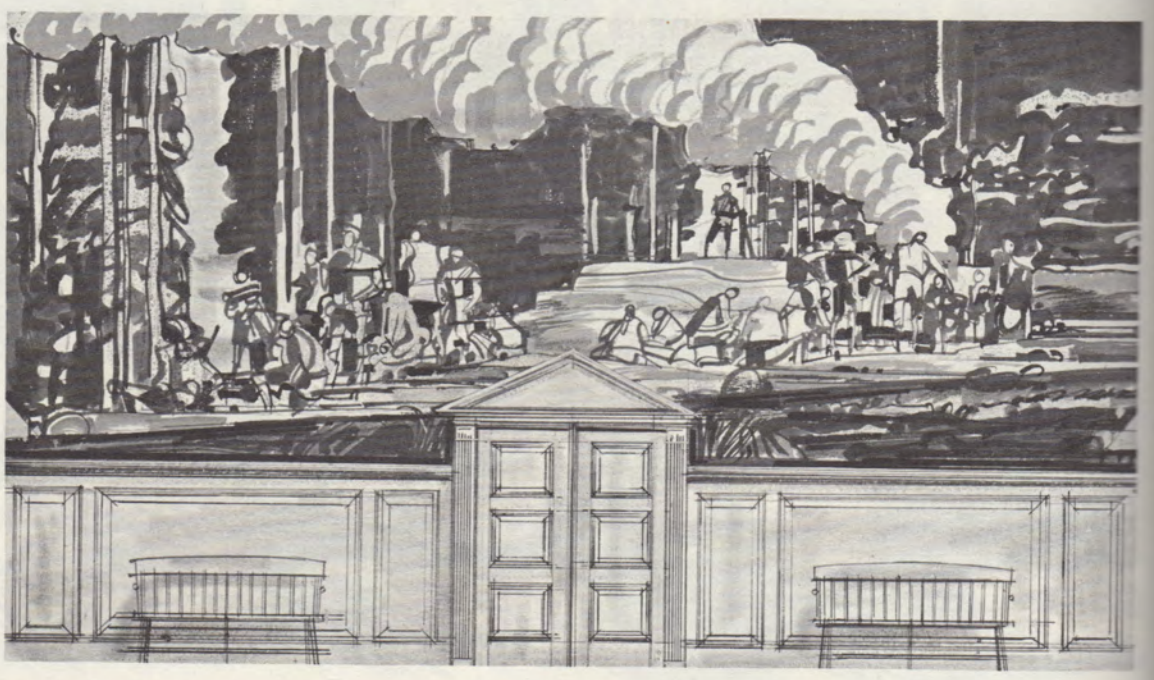
Here is a chapter heading for a book. The original of this drawing measures exactly ten inches across, so you can see why the figures and other elements in it are indicated and suggested rather than worked in detail. The only point I want to make is this, that a small thing can and does contain enough interest to warrant a much larger picture, and this organized content is what makes it interesting as a small line spot. I could not only work this into a large drawing if I wished, I could even do it as a mural!



IN a few moments, when Mrs. Jackson had recovered somewhat from her fatigue [illegible] Andy learned [illegible]

The concept — bigness or size?



Just as a gag idea this is how it would look. I do not claim that this would be in the modern trend of mural decoration, for I am only trying to prove something about a very small illustration. Still, I think it is a pretty good test of design, and proves that the size of your drawing has nothing to do with it — that there is more to making a good line drawing than mere brush manipulation. This should be true of everything you do. I have never painted a mural, but I know this: there is a difference between *bigness* and just *size*. That is the idea I would like to get over to you.

Error in taste

You see that the picture has a definitely triangular movement, and the smoke obviously should have been governed by this, as I show you in this diagram. I reproduce it here just to warn you to beware of these errors of taste. Perhaps you think these are not important but they are. This drawing has always irritated me. I know now that the reason is the way the smoke from the burning buildings drifts off in quite the wrong direction (compositionally).

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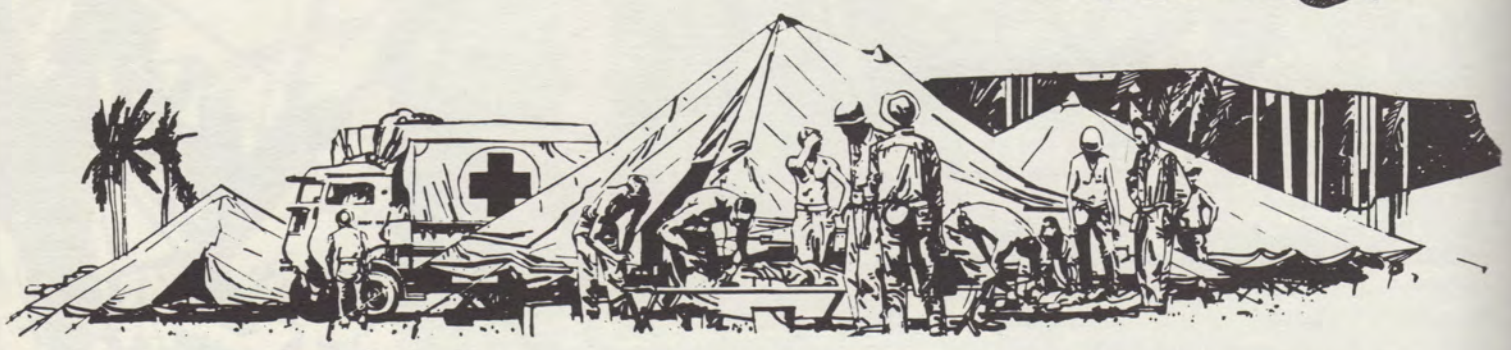
You see how intensely dramatic one can be, yet this is relieved by a kind of graceful fluid rendering. Only a brush will work exactly like this, and the slightly sticky lampblack has the advantage of always being black.

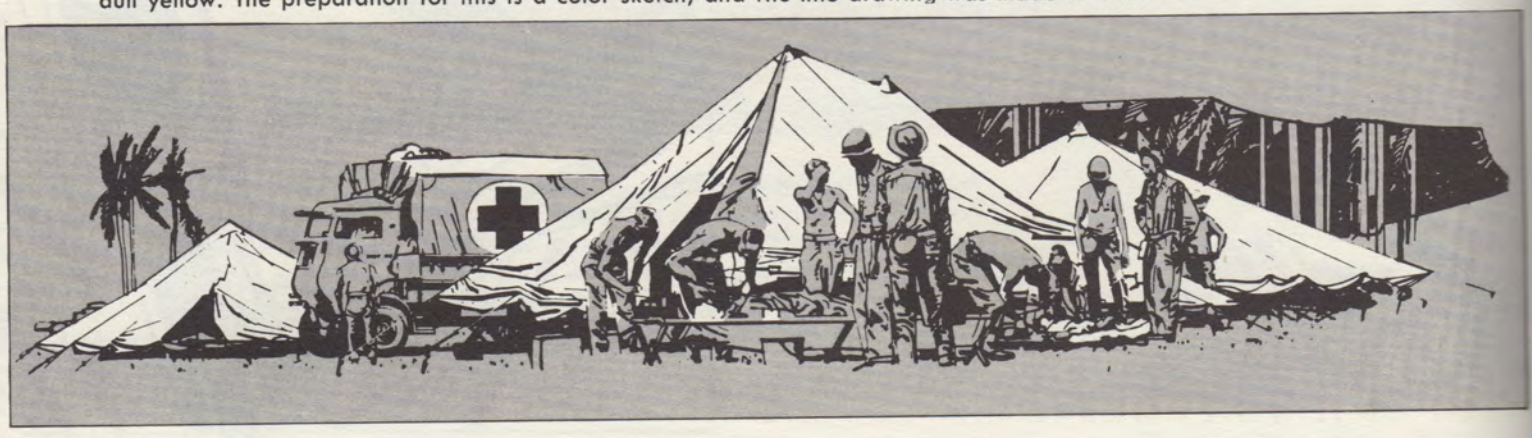
Contrast in Mood

Here is a vignette in strictly archaic style. Everything is drawn carefully and decoratively (as usual in lampblack, but this time with a fairly small Winsor and Newton sable), and the whole idea is to reproduce the effect of an old wood engraving. The line and pattern are precise, almost naive. It reproduces well and does just what it is supposed to do — imitate the woodcut.

Line Spots



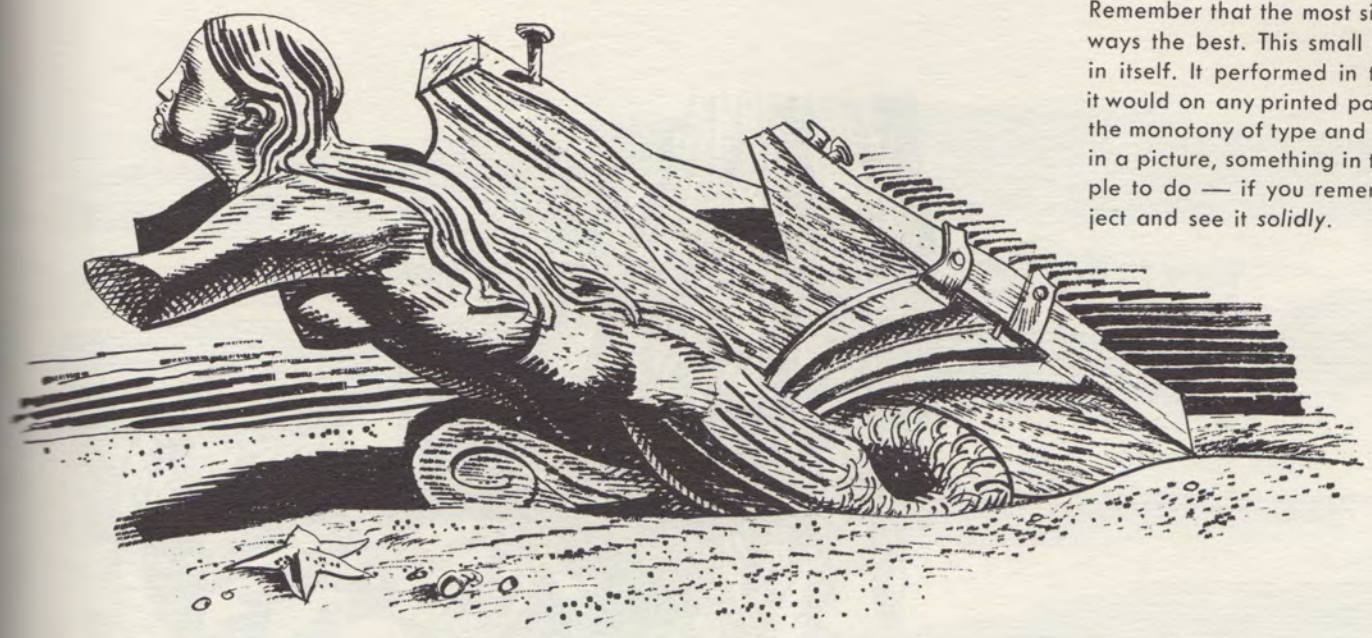
The original line drawing for this heading looked like the above. It was drawn anticipating the use of a second color (indicated by tone below), and the tents are designed to produce a pleasant pattern of white against this color, which was a dull yellow. The preparation for this is a color sketch, and the line drawing was made to fit it.



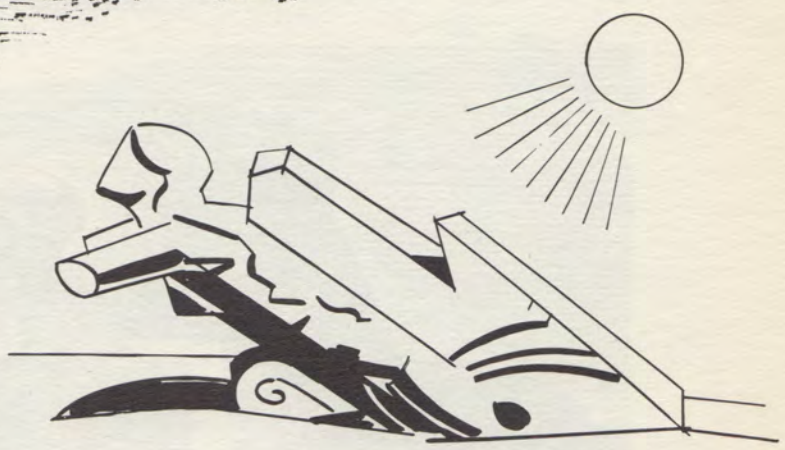
Robert Fawcett

Line drawing

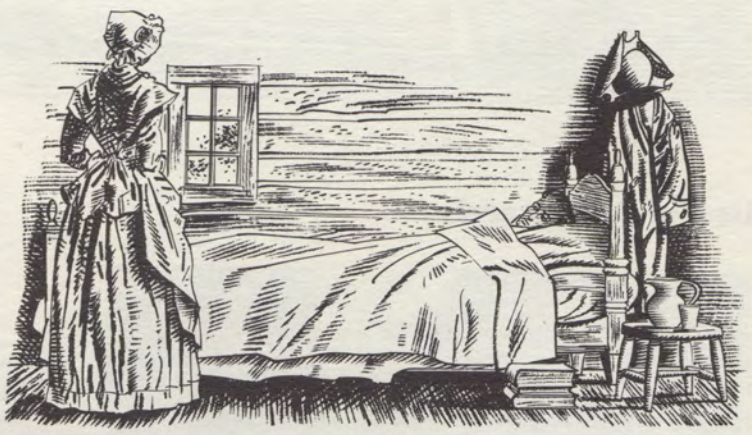
Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.



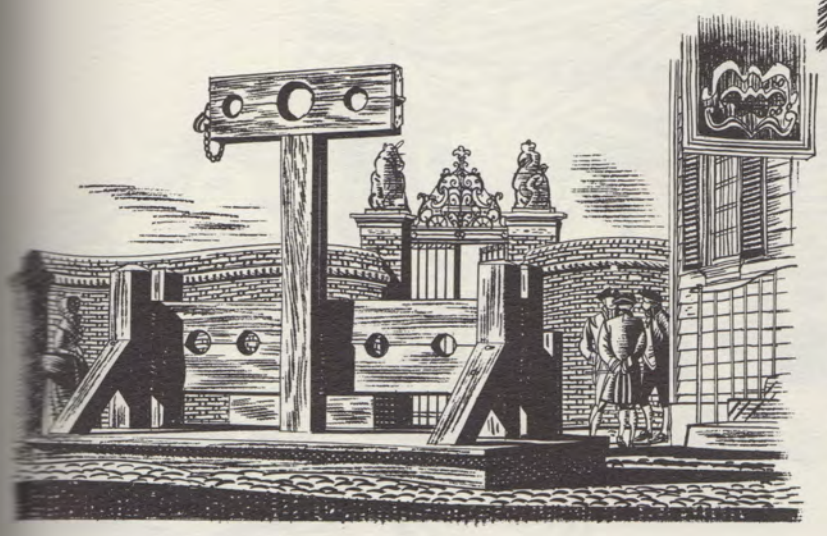
Remember that the most simple, direct means are always the best. This small decorative spot is nothing in itself. It performed in the magazine the function it would on any printed page—just a spot to relieve the monotony of type and at the same time to reflect, in a picture, something in the story. These are so simple to do — if you remember the shape of the object and see it *solidly*.



Simplified, this is all it is, block and ovoid forms with a definite light direction. The only difference between this diagram and the original drawing is the absence of *texture* — which in line corresponds to color. I choose this simple example to break down because I want to take some of the mystery out of this business for you. If you learn to *think* clearly and directly — the product of your hand will reflect this.



I always try to plan the disposition of objects, such as coat and hat, jug and glass, books, etc., so that they somehow tie in with the character they have to do with.



These kinds of spots are ideal for book illustration, in which the paper is often too soft for lines. Drawings like this survive the crudest reproduction methods. That is why I did them in this way—precise, clean and immaculate. Remember that if you get a bad reproduction it is usually (but not always) your fault. Most line drawing is a convention, adopted to overcome restrictions of reproduction and printing, and if the artist knows the conditions, he should draw in a way that cannot be ruined. Incidentally, overcoming these restrictions requires that the artist employ a decorative convention which often has a distinct charm of its own.

Robert Fawcett

18 Line drawing

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

This is a decorative still life to accompany a Thanksgiving poem. Appropriate objects are placed in a decorative order and rendered with the greatest variety of texture. As you can see, the light direction is always present and dictates all modeling and texture.

Useful line exercise

Translating a tone drawing into line is a useful way to gain facility with the medium. Here I have used one of my own things, but it is not necessary. Sometimes a good news photograph lends itself to this. Draw freely, and do not try to match tone for tone. As in the translation of a book — this is a different language.

How I make a picture

by R.F. ROBERT FAWCETT

lesson 7

MEMBER OF THE FACULTY OF

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

Westport, Connecticut

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Robert Fawcett

2 Advertising illustration

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

Advertising Illustration

Part one

In choosing pictures I have done, to illustrate this and the following lesson, you will notice that I have again concentrated on the preliminary work rather than on the finished product. The latter category you can study in any of the periodicals more or less as it looked, depending on the reproduction. The preparatory stages are usually not later available for study and should therefore be of far greater value to the student, if he looks at them critically. These drawings on the tissue pad are *visual thinking,* and should be studied less for what appears than to try to ascertain the thinking which dictated them.

Another reason for showing preliminary work is that with this lesson I start a six-part supplement on pure draftsmanship — learning to draw. So I concentrate here, in the lesson proper, on *applied* drafstmanship, the use to which the aptitude is put. The ability to draw and the use of that ability are two different things and in using your ability it is good to have a full reservoir of knowledge.

In practice, there is little difference between the illustrator who does advertising drawings and the one who does editorial illustration. Today, one must be adaptable and able to do either.

It would be wise, however, to look into this for a moment, and attempt to analyze the situation which exists today and its effect upon the artist.

The illustrator who has made a reputation in editorial illustration and whose work appears regularly in the periodicals is usually in demand by the advertising agencies. It is well reasoned by the agencies, that work which attracts the reader, enticing him to stop and read stories, will also make him stop and read advertisements.

There, however, the similarity between advertising and editorial illustration ends. Except in rare instances, where an exceptional agency is representing an exceptional client who allows the artist freedom to do the picture the way in which his ability and experience tell him it should be done, advertising illustration has tended to become dull, hackneyed and mediocre.

One reason, of course, is the intrusion of the man who pays the bills — the client. His position gives him the right to prefer and to buy mediocre illustration over the advice of the specialists, and he exercises this right with almost unfailing regularity. The artist faced with this situation does just as the doctor who makes the rich pay for the poor, he exacts a higher price, and retains his creative energy for the problems which offer him greater challenge.

This is not to say that advertising illustration should be treated casually. It is just that it is no good beating one's head against a wall — the artist must know and accept the situation, and adjust himself to it. The average illustrator does not find this too difficult, (and where a large income is the prime motive there is no reason why he should!) . After a while, however, unless he is very careful, he will find his talents atrophying.

Acceptance of restrictions and working under orders (in the form of a complete layout and sketch prepared by someone else) becomes a habit, and he ends up by being a technician — supplying the facile rendering, but completely ignoring the spirit within himself which is the artist and which cries for development.

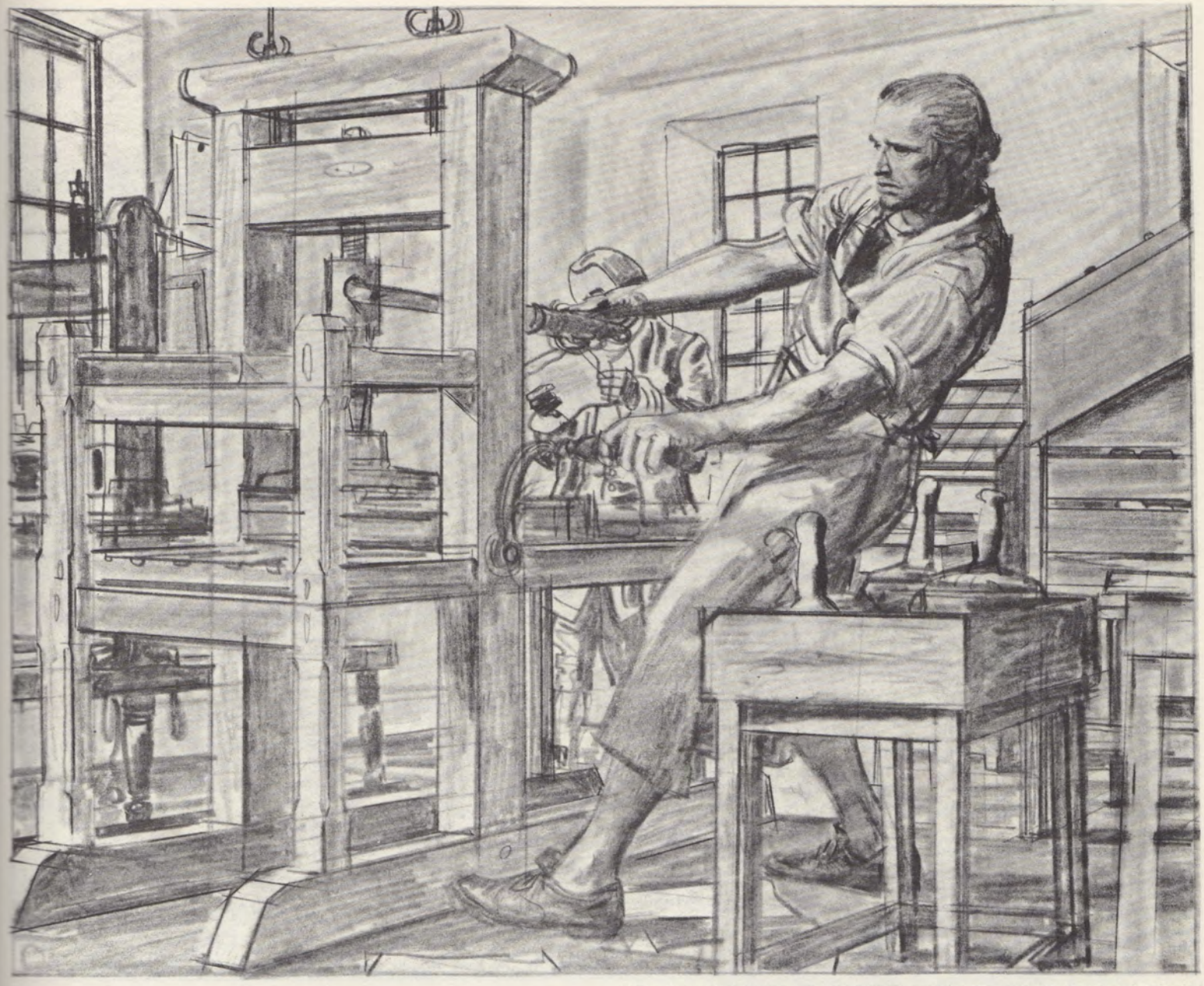
I have found this out through bitter experience, but now I see the situation clearly and accept it.

Technically the problems in both fields of illustrating are about the same. We use the same methods and take the same care in the advertising drawing that we do for the double page editorial spread. But the problems in advertising are simpler and usually make very small demands on the artist's ability or imagination. Whereas stories often (though not always) call for pictures of subtly elusive mood, mystery, drama and conflict, gaiety or humor, advertising illustration, for the most part, deals with simpler emotions. Its pri-

Robert Fawcett

Advertising illustration

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.



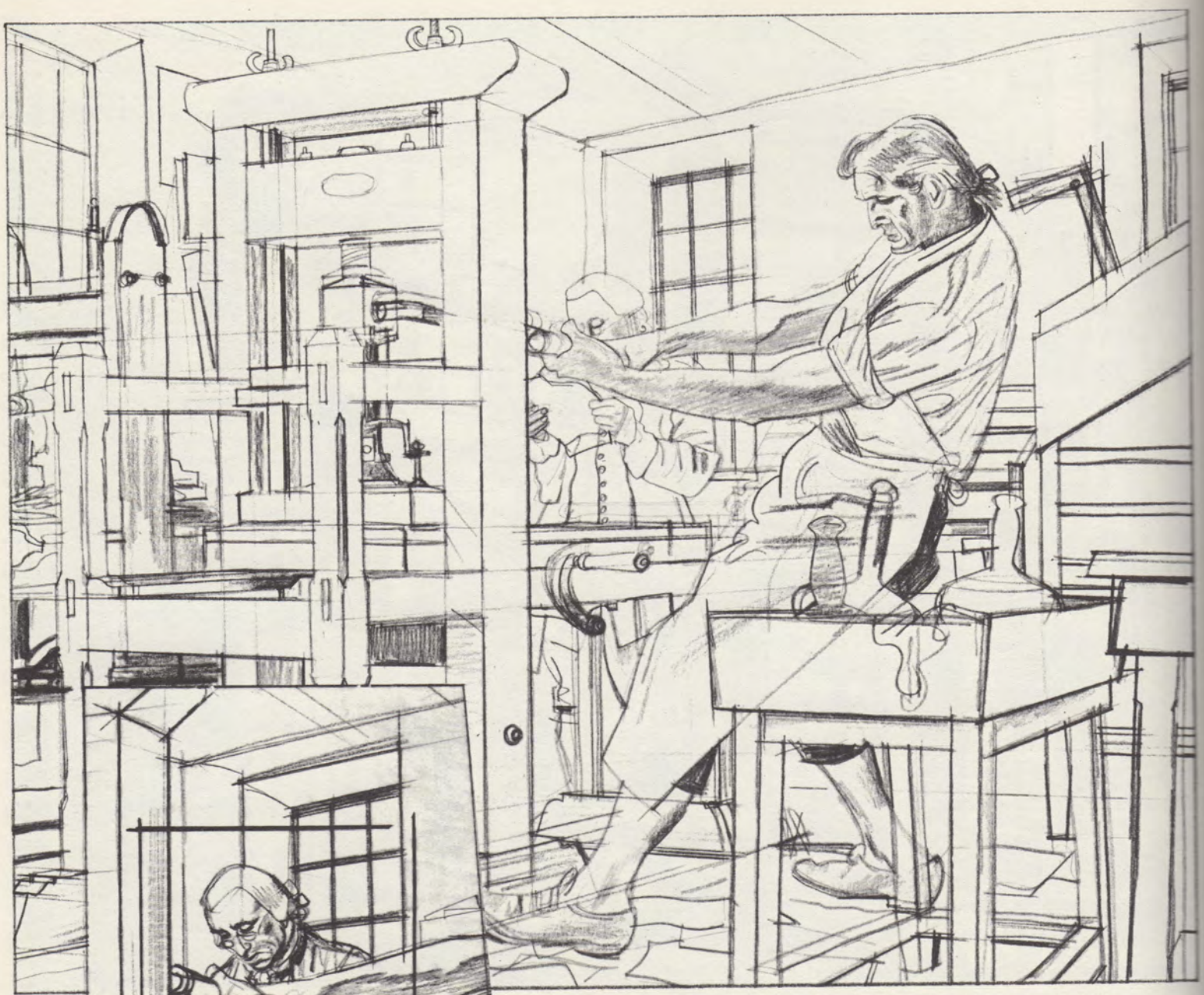
Here is my first sketch, submitted to the agency, for an institutional advertisement for a life insurance company. The spirit of the copy was "American Idealism," and freedom of speech was to be typified by the young Colonial printer at his press. This sketch differs radically from the layout I received from the agency and because I changed it so much I submitted this version in a fairly complete form. The details of the printing office had to be correct and this required considerable research. Further investigation proved that I was wrong in the position of the printer's left hand on the crank. Inasmuch as the technicalities (press and type cases) would be objects of severe scrutiny, I drew this sketch to the size I intended to work the finished drawing — fourteen by eighteen inches. This simplified making any corrections in re-tracing.

mary end is to sell or publicize merchandise, and that is not done by presenting the prospective buyer with pictures which pose a problem for him or call for much exercise of his imagination. They should be unvaryingly pleasing. The color must be inviting and harmonious, and the subject matter likewise. The message must be recognized immediately, (which is not bad, for clarity is always desirable). To any commercial artist with taste these are simple rules and only a rebel like myself ever tries to buck them. I have, or did have, a theory that an occasional visual blow between the eyes was not a bad thing, even if you wanted to end up by selling your victim something. Unfortunately this is not borne out by most surveys and statistics. The public apparently likes to be gently cajoled, mildly influenced and subtly complimented, and this is the

Robert Fawcett

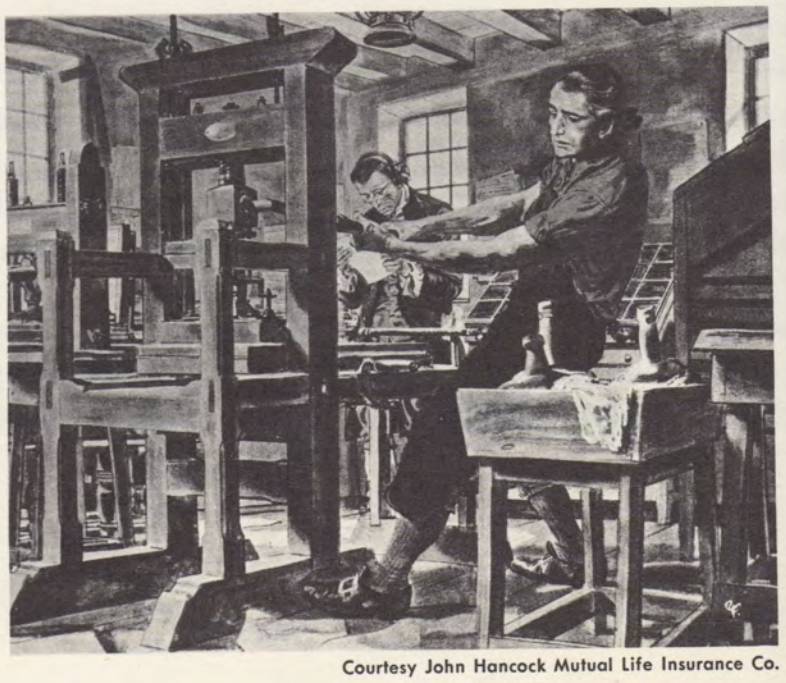
4 Advertising illustration

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

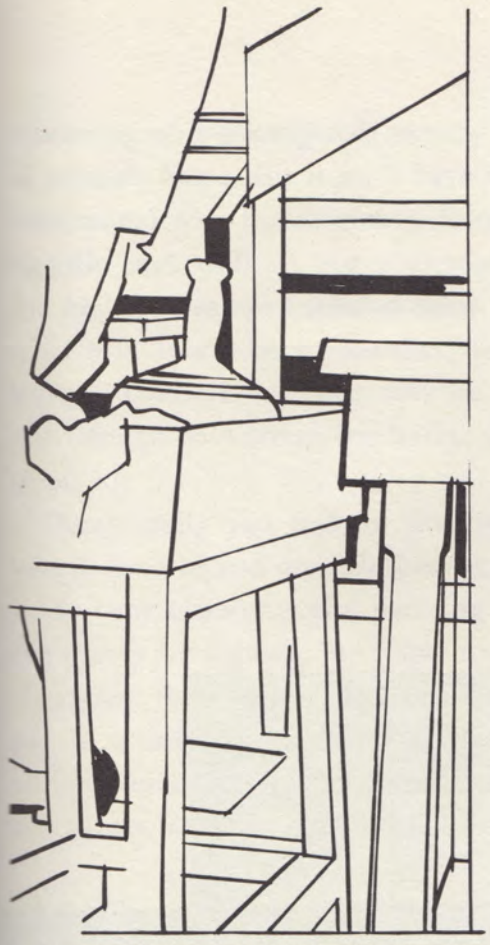


This second version of the sketch simplifies the original one and establishes the action of the main figure. It is bad that an assignment like this must contain so many details, inaccuracies in which would be seized upon by experts. Trying to avoid inaccuracies as I did, I found the drawing stiffening up which was not in harmony with the spirit of the advertisement's requirements. "Feeling" was compromised by factualness. This is a common danger in advertising illustration; it comes from years of never having received a criticism which did not question the authenticity of a detail. I rarely get a criticism on the lack of mood or the loss of spirit. These latter qualities are left to us to maintain, and we strive to preserve them against what we often feel is an exaggerated concern for factual accuracy.

Here is a detail taken from the third tracing. It shows how I brought the old boss printer into more prominence by moving him up and away from the hands on the lever. His absorption in reading a proof now becomes an addition to the scene.



Courtesy John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Co.



In the second lesson, I explained my concern for constructing details of a picture by interlocking forms. You see how I use this device here, where an excess of detail would cause confusion.

Here is a separate study for the main figure. I liked the determined "square-jawed" expression, but the client advised a return to a more realistic character.

philosophy underlying the preparation of advertising — the motivation of a machine in which the commercial artist is a minor cog.

The subject matter is not complicated, but interpretation gives it infinite variety. Advertising is directed either to women, to men or to both — rarely to children, except through their parents, for children obviously do not constitute a flush section of the buying public.

Romance is, of course, used most widely, and this runs the gamut from the adolescent appeal to the more sophisticated manifestations used only in smarter magazines of smaller circulation. It is obvious that a family periodical reaching as many as ten million readers a week and going into homes of every degree of nonsophistication cannot exploit any but the more starry-eyed and non-controversial aspects of romance. This it does by using pretty girls, handsome men and comely matrons, tying these symbols neatly to the product with clever copy.

Nostalgia forms another large subject. This exploits family life — the ideal contemporary or wistful memories of childhood. The character around whom this centers is the American Mother figure, either the charming young matron or the gentle elderly lady. That these idealized figures live largely in the imagination of the advertising agency seems to make little difference in their popularity. The response is immediate and apparently eternal.

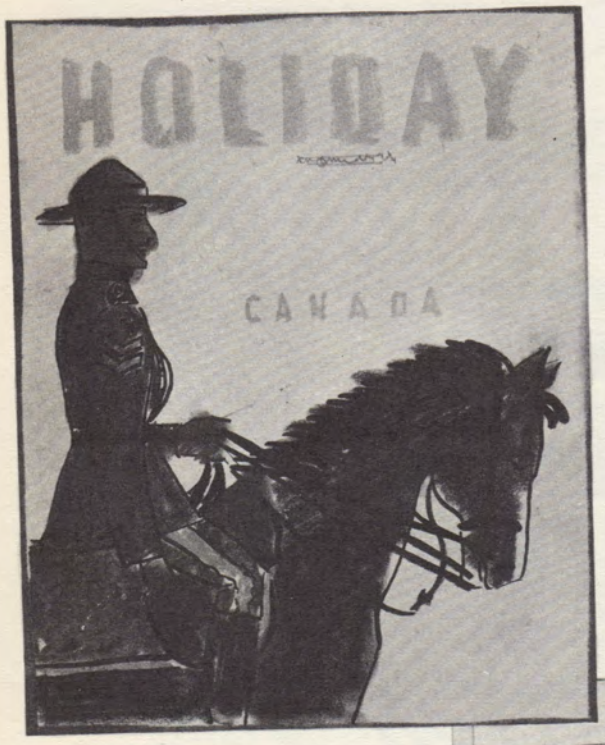
Occasionally a courageous soul will try to depict some of the more realistic aspects of family life, (not any less pleasant or nostalgic, just more observant and true to life). But the imaginative symbol is still paramount in popularity, apparently on the theory that if this is not the way it always is, it's the way it should be!

I am forced to admit that I believe the photographer often supplies the perfect illustration for this kind of subject. I qualify this by saying that I believe this is true when the illustration calls for nothing more than a depiction of character and not an involved scene of considerable emotional content. If an artist is called upon to do this, he usually ends by producing a faithful

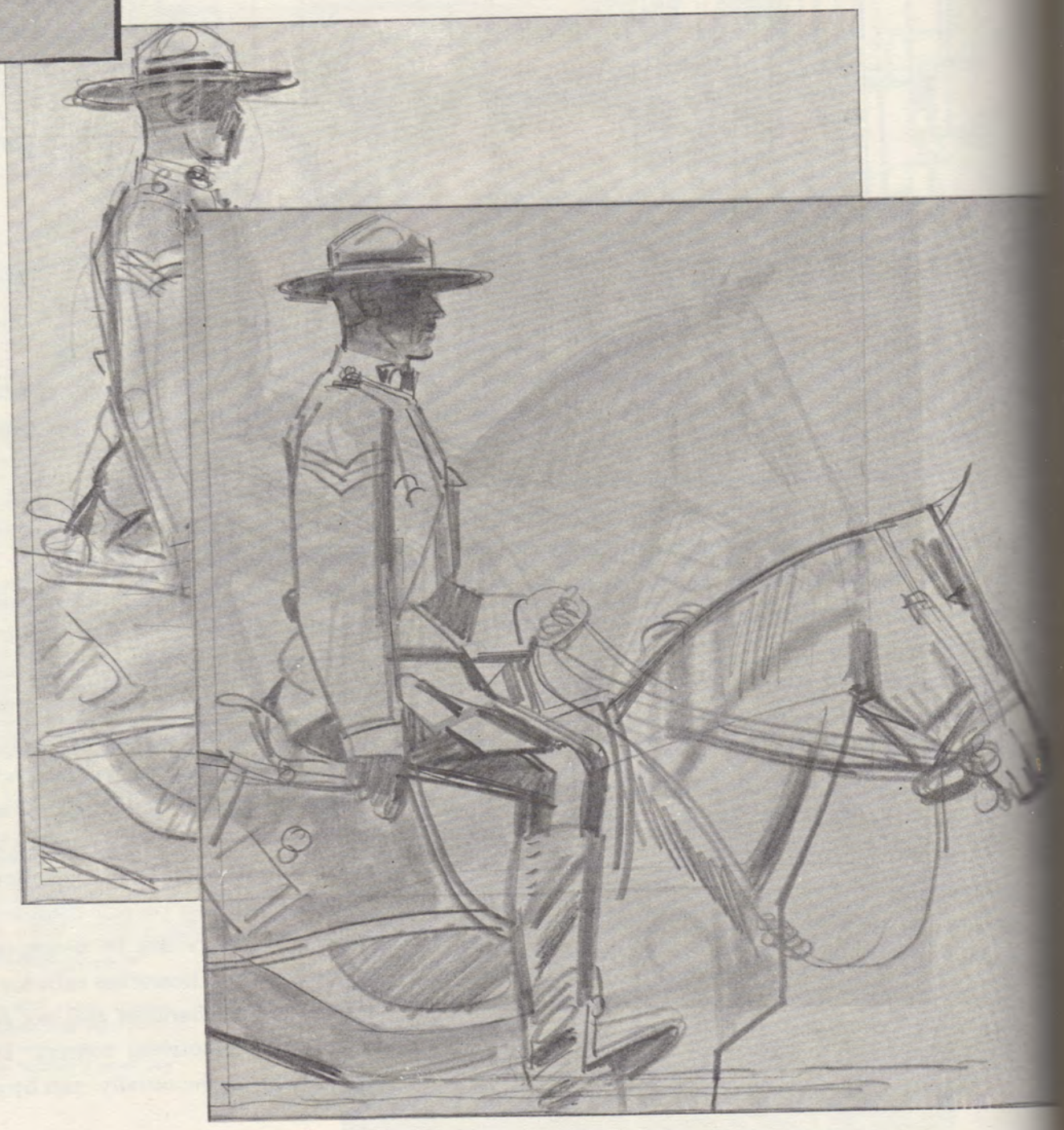
Robert Fawcett

6 Advertising illustration

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.



A magazine cover, like this one for *Holiday*, is an editorial rather than an advertising drawing. I include it here, however, because it has one thing in common with advertising illustrations — the conception was the art director's, not my own. His rough sketch on the left leaves little doubt as to what he wants. When an illustrator is faced with a layout of this unalterable clarity, he accepts it and concerns himself with making his contribution the most eloquent realization of the sketch that he can.



Here are the first and second tracings. To make these, I referred to innumerable photographs of Canadian Mounties. Services are quick to resent inaccurately portrayed equipment but I had no trouble in this case since the Mounties sent me all the data I needed. A letter to the headquarters of such an organization is small trouble to take in order to be certain of factual accuracy. It is part of being a good illustrator. The client throws the job in your lap, and it is up to you to see that he is not embarrassed later by inadequate research on *your* part.

rendering of a photograph anyway — or a distillation of several. Since this is so, I have never been able to understand why the original photograph, taken intelligently and well, is not preferable, especially with the highly developed state of color photography being what it is. It will be argued that "the artist adds something." I admit that this may be true, in part, but not enough to warrant his building an artistic career upon it!

Occasionally you find an illustrator, a personality, who is fond of and uncritical of people, who has spent a life time observing and painting not only how people's faces are formed, but how those faces reflect their character, their foibles, humors, virtues and weaknesses. It is only the exceptional advertising illustration which wants to go into this, and what we see most often are masks, symbols which we are supposed to recognize. The service station attendant should be the archtype of all that is best in his profession, young, good-looking, friendly and honest. The business man must reflect his efficiency and dynamism, with overtones of benign humanitarianism. When the artist finds himself the handmaiden of industry, as he does when he is working for advertising, I think he is wise to be completely honest with himself, and to realize exactly what *he* can contribute, and what another medium could do better. Then there would not be the conflict between photography and drawing which exists today. I have rarely seen the entirely photographic illustration which succeeds in doing what a fine illustrator can produce in editorial illustration, but I have seen many drawings for advertising which a photograph would have done better.

The donkey work is done, so the rendering can be as free and inventive as the job allows. My concern at this stage was to extract and emphasize the maximum of design without resorting to conventional formula.

The main elements of the design are the flat relationship of scarlet jacket against the blue of the trousers and saddle pad and, through this, the simple pattern of brilliant yellow (indicated in black above) of trouser stripe, pad border, insignia and sleeve stripes. The tenuous white lines of the revolver lanyard and those which droop under and attach to the bridle (shown with dotted lines), operate in the design on their own.

Robert Fawcett

8 Advertising illustration

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

This page and the three following ones are concerned with an advertising campaign for a distilling company. An advertising *campaign* is usually designed for a cumulative effect, which means that there must be a quickly recognizable similarity in each ad; at the same time, monotony must be avoided. The restrictions of this particular campaign were rigid for, in each case, the subject matter involved the repetition of two figures — a reporter questioning a whiskey purchaser. Apart from whatever variety I was able to inject into these two characters, the only other thing I had to work with was an identifying locale — a different city in each picture. The three cities I show here are Boston, San Francisco and Chicago.

The drawing of the figures did not involve any technical strain. I drew from photographs because the variety of action and posture I could employ was limited — only subtle variations were possible. In most cases I posed myself, occasionally posing a friend for the sake of variety. From a group of pictures I selected the tilt of a head or a more expressive action of hands to combine the best qualities of the photographs in my drawings. The finished drawing had to create a nice vignette with an "on the scene" flavor. T' reporter had to show a lively interest, the "interviewee" a pleasant willingness to cooperate. The specific locale for each ad was selected as being typical of the portrayed city and I used only those elements which identified it immediately. Again, this was an exercise in spatial economy.

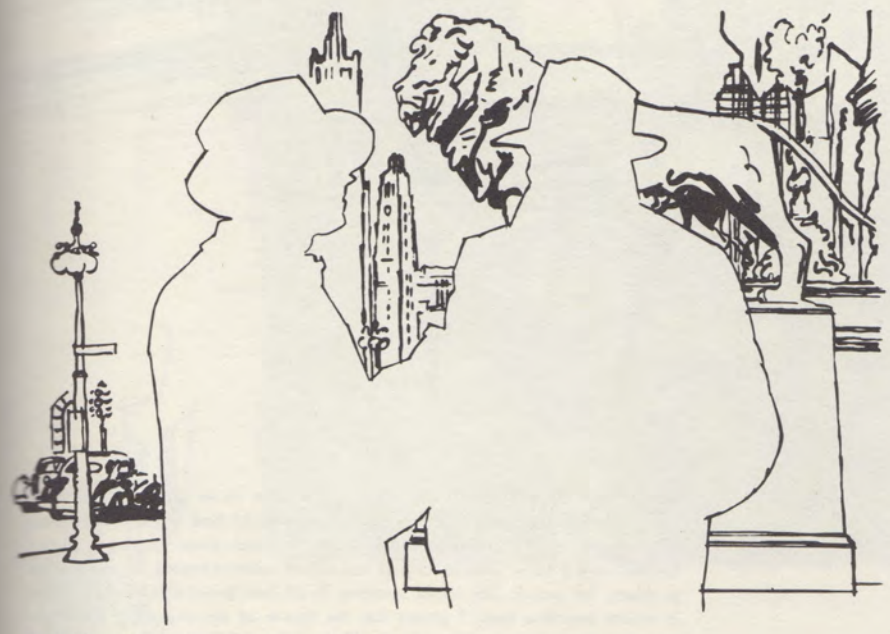
Robert Fawcett

Advertising illustration

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

The drawings occupied only a small part of the total ad space because the campaign was based on a catchy slogan. The illustration is nothing more than an atmosphere spot, but in each case it had to be right. Advertising drawings like these are misleading for, on the surface, not much shows. The challenge to the artist lies in what he is able to do within the limitations; it tests the ingenuity more than the imagination. I knew the figures were to be lopped off halfway down. I painted the full figures, however, in case the ads were later scheduled for a different layout.

Courtesy Hiram Walker, Inc.



By taking the background out of the context of the picture I show you how a little space has been made to say a great deal. A lion from in front of the Art Institute, a distant view of the Wrigley building, a lamp post and a suggestion of taxis all say "Chicago" as quickly as possible. Anything else would have been extraneous.

This is an actual size study for one of the figures. The photo from which I drew possessed only vaguely what I wanted to portray. From the photo, and based on the character I had in mind, I could have created an entirely different personality. A colleague of mine posed for this character.

Robert Fawcett

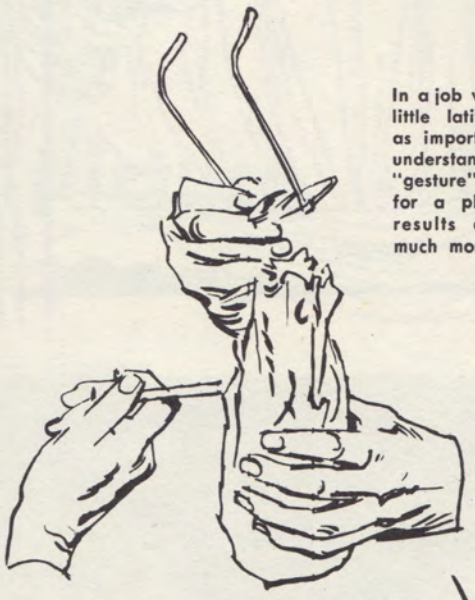
10 Advertising illustration

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

Boston was more difficult than Chicago. I have never spent any time in Boston, but I did know that the typical landmarks had been overworked. This statue of Paul Revere suggested Colonial New England (hence Boston) and I knew that plenty of red bricks around would do even more to place the scene. The usual spotting in of background followed, where it would function best. I posed for the figure of the reporter; the other figure is that of an artist friend. After a few pictures were completed for this campaign I got a little frantic trying effect changes in the same, simple, two-figure situation, but this is one of the restrictions of advertising we have to accept. Although the drawing was made in mid-winter, I had to remember that this ad would appear in the late spring. The trees and the clothing of the characters had to anticipate this. Such planning is another important "must" for the advertising illustrator.

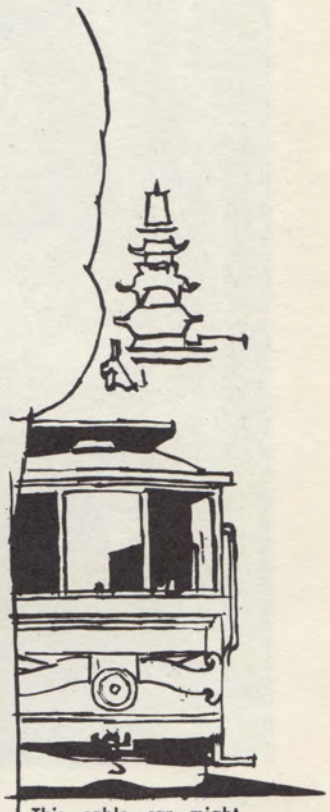
In the data I had to work from, there was a church showing in the background. Although I do not believe there is any absolute rule about it, good taste seems to dictate that churches should not show in liquor ads, so I used the foliage of the trees to good advantage here.

Courtesy Hiram Walker, Inc.



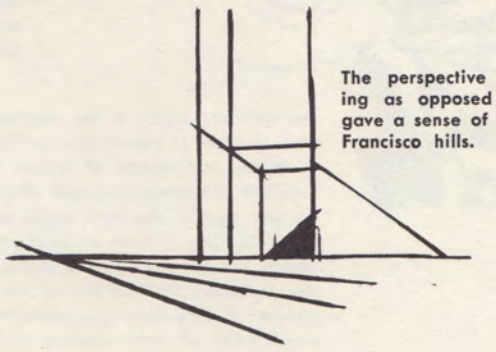
In a job which allows very little latitude, hands are as important as faces. To understand and cultivate "gesture" go and pose for a photographer. The results are better and much more convincing.

Courtesy Hiram Walker, Inc.



This cable car might have been better half hidden behind the figure to avoid confusion with the China Town pagoda in the distance. Dozens of artists are capable of doing drawings like this and one is driven to these refinements by that knowledge.

A very small space, instead of being wasted with something inconsequential, is used to show a mile-long view down a San Francisco street.



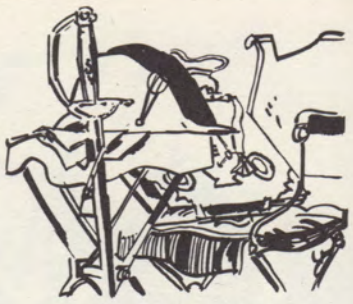
The perspective of the building as opposed to the street gave a sense of the steep, San Francisco hills.

Robert Fawcett

12 Advertising illustration

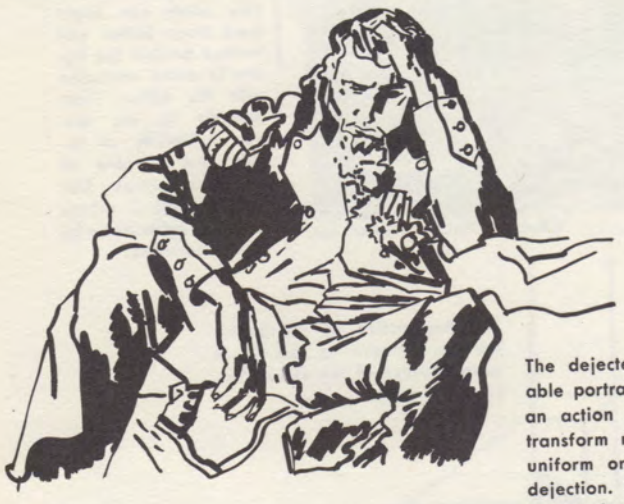
Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

Napoleon's camp bed has almost the appearance of a stage set. The question is how much of it to show. The answer, enough to identify it, and no more. Except for the pillow ticking it would take a second look to really "place" this scene. I consider this provocative and therefore a good quality for an illustration to have.



The accoutrements, hat, brief case, folding table and chair are authentic. Napoleon travelled with these on his campaigns, and the New York Library had them pictured. If only one person in a thousand seeing the picture, recognizes this, the illustrator has saved himself criticism. Start doing this now, so that it becomes a habit.

Reject



Sometimes I do *not* agree with the client, and this picture of Napoleon in his tent, having "lost the Battle of Waterloo because he was tired," was one of those times. The question was whether my drawing resembled Napoleon. It does not, of course, resemble the conventional portraits we all know. My contention was that Napoleon, in his tent at night, illuminated by a lamp on another table, tired and dishevelled, would look just about as I visualized him here. If the recognition was not immediate, then the hat, sword and other accoutrements would soon complete the identification. Unhappily, no meeting of minds occurred at this point, and rather than change his face to one which I thought would be out of character with the whole scene, I decided to keep it for myself. Not many of the people who have seen it fail to identify the character, and it would, I think, have attracted attention in an ad. I reproduce it here, not in pique, but to demonstrate the kind of situation which so often occurs in drawing for advertisers — for which one must be prepared. This was in full color.

The dejected figure is the composite of innumerable portraits of him at this particular period, plus an action photograph of myself. It was easy to transform my dungarees and shirt into a military uniform once I saw and could feel the pose of dejection. This is like an editorial illustration — except for the fact that it did not go over. Let me emphasize that not one or two, but two dozen pictures of Napoleon were consulted before I decided which of many showed the correct uniform and medals. This is the importance of research!

How I make a picture

by R.F. ROBERT FAWCETT

lesson 8

MEMBER OF THE FACULTY OF

Institute of Commercial Art, *Inc.*

Westport, Connecticut

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Robert Fawcett

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

Advertising illustration

Advertising Illustration

Part two

One of my personal interests in advertising work is in the emergence of the "designer." The designer, in the modern sense, is a superlative layout man. His materials are not paints and canvas. He has a comprehensive knowledge of type, photography, drawing and reproductive techniques. With taste, intelligence and imagination, he uses these elements in a way to get over a visual idea in a much more direct manner than that which calls for the illustrator's cooperation. The designer uses drawing sparingly, because he has many other elements to work with, and anything drawn is usually an immediately recognized symbol.

The young illustrator would be well advised not to ignore the potency of this form of expression, because the good designer is an artist who challenges the illustrator in current advertising. There is no exact line of demarcation between art directors and designers, for some agency art directors are excellent designers. When the illustrator cooperates with them, his will be a minor role, but he can be sure that what he does will take a lesser but a more functional part in an exciting production, rather than a major part of a more stodgy conception.

I am sometimes called upon to depict "upper crust" scenes for advertising — frankly, snob-appeal assignments. I tell myself that this is not necessarily because I am a snob, but because a moderately observant eye allows me to depict how people behave and look, and what contributes to creating that "smart" atmosphere. I am equally at home in creating any atmosphere which is in harmony with my experience or my imagination. I rebel only when I believe I am being asked to produce something which is artificial or spurious, for then I know the finished picture will never have the *conviction* it should have, and I will never be able to disguise its absence. When I sense this falseness in a layout, a negative reaction is set up which makes me less than cooperative.

For the most part, the artist can consider his relationship with the advertising agency art director a partnership or if you like, a conspiracy. The art director is usually a man of taste and understanding; often he is an artist himself, and although he interprets his client's wishes, he is personally sympathetic to the artist's point of view.

As I have said, the client is the big hurdle in drawing for advertising. Imagine the successful manufacturer who finds himself involved with an advertising campaign, either institutional (good will), or one designed to show an immediate increase in sales. He may be an extremely efficient manufacturer. He may have built up his business from the bottom and know all of its ramifications, but he may still know little about the psychology of advertising — of ingratiating himself and his product with the public. Periodically he is visited by the account man of the advertising agency, with copy, layouts and finished pictures on which the manufacturer has to pass judgement. I say "pass judgement" advisedly, for his response is not spontaneously receptive. Every decision he has had to make in his business has had to be approached critically, to the point of suspicion. This is also his approach to advertising, and most particularly to advertising art. I have been told by the agency that clients have looked at drawings of mine for minutes on end, and finally passed them only because they could "find nothing wrong with them." Not being trained to be *receptive* to pictures, his is often the negative reaction — an effort to *find something wrong*. This, he thinks, will be accepted as the measure of his acumen.

With an approach such as this it is surprising that as many good illustrations appear in the advertising pages as do, but it helps to explain the over-all mediocrity, because the artist who is aware of this reception is inclined to always play it safe. A wise client is one who listens, rather than dictates, to his agency, which after all is an aggregation of specialists, and the best agency is the one which sharply limits the amount of dictation it will accept.

The advertising artist is a small cog in the produc-

Robert Fawcett

Advertising illustration

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

tion of an advertisement. He himself is far removed from the client; he deals almost exclusively with the art director or art buyer. In a way he should be thankful for this and do his utmost to supply drawings which will stimulate and *enthuse the art director,* hoping that the director's enthusiasm will then communicate itself to the client. He won't do this by producing drawings with a *minimum* of thought and application, and he must be as critical of his work as though he were doing an important editorial illustration. This involves all the usual preparatory work — exploring every imaginative possibility and not being afraid to start again from the beginning whenever he feels the final product would benefit by it.

It is extremely important to understand one thing. Advertising drawing is "commercial" art only in that it is done on assignment for a specific purpose (as, in fact, were Michaelangelo's murals for the Sistine Chapel). Granted that the glorification of God is a subject of greater scope than the sale of somebody's product, yet within the present restrictions it is still possible to reveal the artist of greater or lesser stature. This becomes apparent when you can see that no expenditure of effort was too great to achieve the best possible solution to the advertisement problem. The argument that it "won't be appreciated anyway" may be true, but in the end this attitude does infinitely more harm to the artist than to his client.

A good attitude to make your own is that *no* job is too small or too insignificant not to warrant the *best* one can produce. Sometimes this will have to be demonstrated in care and precision of execution, at other times by greater *imagination.* Either way the artist himself gains.

I believe it is correct to say that, for the most part, advertising drawings are usually more highly finished — "polished up." This is not too difficult to understand, for you will find that the absence of emotional content and the resultant simplicity of appeal makes greater attention to technique almost automatic.

Most of the thinking, moreover, has been done before the artist receives the job. The free lance artist is called in only after the layout and sketch have been prepared by the agency and okayed by the client. The artist's job is to render the illustration with greater clarity, conviction and accuracy, and not to depart from the idea he sees expressed in the sketch. This he does with his greater imaginative and technical resources, and the length to which he can depart from the sketch depends on the receptiveness of the art director. Occasionally I am faced with a sketch which I think has failed to exploit the possibilities to the full, and I offer to make a new one before proceeding. The agency is sometimes, but not always, amenable to this, for with the client's O.K. on the layout their battle is already half won, and they may not want to lose ground already gained by making drastic changes in the sketch.

I find, ordinarily, that the job is chiefly one of reorganizing the elements — using the allotted space with greater economy and discarding irrelevant material. I am always impressed with how much more *concise* a picture can be made. Like the speaker whose ideas are fully clarified in his mind and who consequently needs few words to express them, or one whose message is forceful and to the point, stripped of excessive verbiage, so does the artist's illustration gain in clarity. Drawing and painting are a means of communication, and while the picture is always fortified by the text, the less this fortification is leaned upon, the better.

The artist's representative

Opinion is divided as to the desirability of the commercial artist having a representative or agent. Some artists pay a percentage to have someone interview clients and art directors for them (25 per cent is the usual amount). Among magazine art directors it is normal to want to maintain personal contact with the artist, to see him and to explain the problem to him, at least over the telephone. Art directors of advertising agencies, however, more often deal with the artist's representative as a man they trust, who will assume the responsibility for meeting deadlines. If the advertising assignment is complicated and requires the artist's presence, he can always appear.

Most good representatives perform a service for the artist which more than pays their cost. They not only see that their man is always well displayed, but they also

take it upon themselves to decline work which they know is not right for their artist to do. They also do research, and even take photographs if necessary, so that when a job arrives in the artist's studio, no time is wasted and the artist can go right to work. Representatives do all the billing and maintain an office which, if the artist lives out of town, becomes his headquarters in the city. Perhaps even more valuable is the agent's understanding of his particular artist's personality and his ability to translate instructions for corrections in such a way as to protect a temperament not always in sympathy with the problems of business men. (My agent does this admirably for me, although I have always known when he was doing it!) This is an ideal and mutually profitable arrangement.

There are artists, on the other hand, who do not have a representative; they are not hesitant about meeting clients or displaying their own work. These men dispense with an agent's service, unless the pressure of work makes it more economical to have one, (for the artist only produces when he is in his studio).

An agent is invaluable to the beginner. He has an entrée to art directors that the beginning artist does not have, and he can help greatly to build the young artist's career. The difficulty, for the young artist, is to enlist the interest of a good representative, for the best of them are beset by more artists than they can handle with integrity. The only way to engage the interest of a representative is, of course, to present him with a portfolio of work of promising calibre. After being assured of the agent's reputation and standing, the young artist would be well advised to put his work entirely into the agent's hands and to be guided by his advice. This does not rule out the artist's ambition to improve and change; drawings of the kind of work he wants to do should be constantly added to what he has already done. Only in this way do art directors see his latest output.

Finding the right agent is an important step that should be discussed with art directors and other artists whose judgment may prove helpful.

Case Histories

1

2

3

The pictures in this lesson show the development of several ads for a campaign run by The Carrier Corporation. These three tracings demonstrate my preliminary thinking and refinement of the concept I had in mind for this ad. Tracings like these do not take long to make and each one comes nearer to my conception of the way the picture should be done. I find a black crayon pencil is ideal for drawing on the tracing pad. The crayon does not smudge and it has a nice texture.

4

The final tracing is shown above while on the left I have begun to paint. When I work in gouache, I start by patterning the drawing "in the flat" until the picture surface is covered. Only then do I begin to model within the areas until at the finish (and especially if I use varnish or synthetic preservative to bring out the color) the result looks like a small oil painting. If, after I have done this, I find I want to work further on the picture, I know of nothing but casein tempera that will adhere to the treated surface. I am often fooled by having the engraver's camera pick out and distort these re-worked areas when I thought I had succeeded in matching the color perfectly. This is something of which to beware.

5

Here is the final drawing for an advertisement describing how ice was cut in New England ponds in the early 1800's and sent to India. My main difficulty seemed to be to imagine how an ice-cutter of that period would dress. I could have gotten over the period idea by doing the picture in an archaic manner, but this was one of a series of ads, and the style for the campaign had been set with pictures of more contemporary subject matter. I had to follow their style because, in a campaign, this resemblance between successive ads must not be lost.

6

Courtesy Carrier Corp.

Robert Fawcett

6 Advertising illustration

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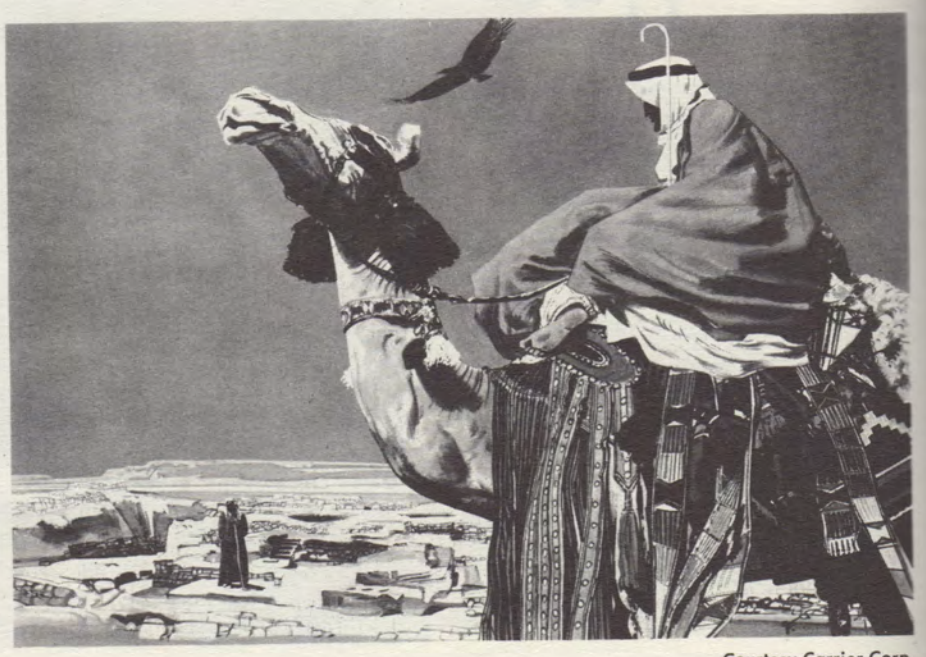
The drawing for this ad went so easily that only one version was required. One reason is that this was not a complicated picture. The idea, (and it is always necessary to understand "the idea" to see whether or not the picture came off) is that civilizations disappeared because of heat and lack of water. An Arab is looking down from his camel on the ruins of a once thriving town. You may ask "Why the Arab? Could not the idea have been more quickly conveyed by a deserted and barren landscape?" It could have, probably with more stark drama than this concept, but the campaign had started with pictures dominated by figures, and to avoid losing continuity, a similar element was introduced into this picture. To me, these are the best kind of advertising drawings to do. The subject matter is romantic and uninhibiting. The trappings of the camel offered an opportunity for rich oriental color, and the hot, desert sand against a cloudless blue sky told the story simply.



Courtesy Carrier Corp.

The blue of the sky was not right out of the tube. I mixed cobalt and cerulean with white and added a touch of ochre to that. When I had painted it in, it did look flat, as I wanted it to, but it lacked distance. I was painting in casein tempera, which is difficult to fool with, so I carefully air brushed a lighter ochre at the horizon line, which immediately gave me the spaciousness I was looking for. The rest was painted freely in casein. The soaring bird overhead was a last minute idea which seemed to add to the loneliness of the whole aspect, as does the single standing figure. I seem to have come to a decision about the crook of the Arab's cane, which was still under consideration in the drawing above. I had very good information on camels and trappings from the library. My own file is still very inadequate, although I am continually adding to it.

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Advertising illustration

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Courtesy Carrier Corp.

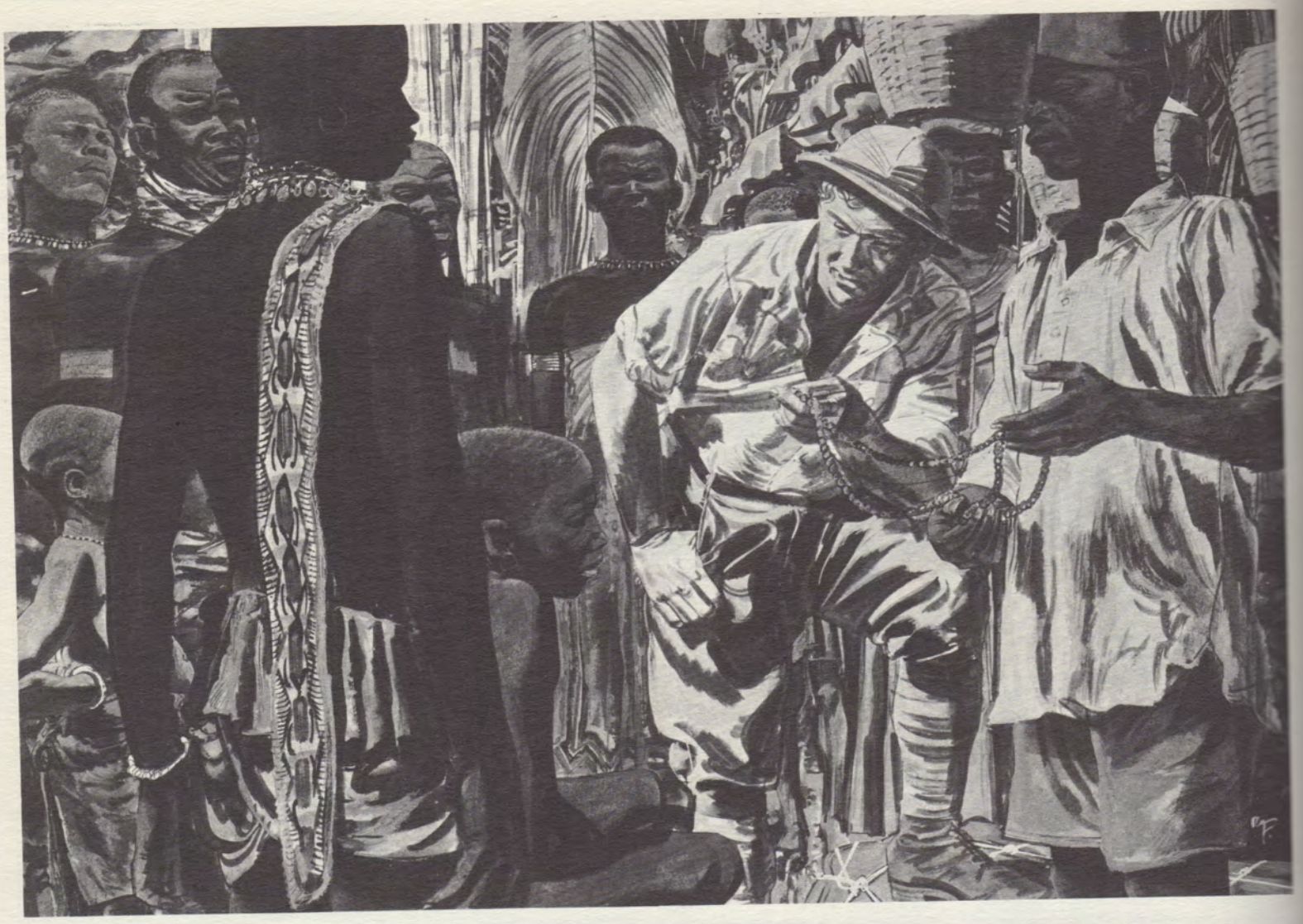
Here a westerner and a tenderfoot of fifty years ago are being made uncomfortable by dust. This kind of subject allows for as much freedom as a lot of story illustration, and except for the restrictions of space, more than most! There are artists who specialize in "Westerns," but the one who does not can sometimes bring a refreshing change to hackneyed material. For this, I took a photo of two people in the position I wanted but without costume. All I needed was the "feel" of the poses and of the hands holding the reins. I could never have imagined how hands looked in this position, holding the lines taut. My drawing is always based on the thing observed, not the formula remembered. I said earlier that illustrating is too difficult for one to overlook any means to achieve the result. Just be sure that the result is what you intended.

I drew to organize the figures, stage coach and cactus into a tight little pattern. As I drew, I designed "light shapes" to get over the idea of bright sunlight when I came to paint. You see also an endeavor to compose these shapes rhythmically. One of the sure signs of the artist who cannot draw well enough is when he ignores the decorative aspect of a picture. He is struggling too hard to draw accurately and has nothing left over for the things which give work distinction.

Robert Fawcett

Advertising illustration

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.



The scene of a trader in the African jungle was one of the series. The client is selling the idea that "in a hot, humid climate, trade slows to a snail's pace." The agency questioned whether the trader looked hot enough, whether his was not the gesture of a football coach giving the team a pep talk. Of course the criticism is valid, and regardless of whether I, or they, happened to like the drawing technically, it had to be done over. There was no argument from me, for I agreed with them. It is not always easy to discard three days work and start over, especially if one has other deadlines to meet, but things like this are sometimes the result of one's own stupidity.

Makeover

Courtesy Carrier Corp.

Rarely, in a picture of this kind, can much be salvaged. A radical change in the position of a main figure forces a re-consideration of everything else. I rejected the suggestion that I might save part of the first attempt. My makeover is, compositionally, an entirely different picture, but the client's copy idea is more closely matched, and *that is what is important in advertising art!*

This is the agency layout for the whole series. The picture we are discussing is to occupy the upper panel.

Aesthetically, this would have been a better picture shape for the subject. Only one tree is necessary to give meaning to the rope.

Here is a sketch for an ad. In this case the client is selling refrigeration and the subject pictures an obsolete manner of hanging meat. The space is a horizontal one and the subject obviously calls for a vertical. I got over this hurdle by using trees as a device to bring in the sides of the picture until the area of interest was concentrated vertically, which I thought was better. Some people may say this is a dramatic composition; I point out to you that it is the result of necessity — the mother of invention.

Robert Fawcett

10 Advertising illustration

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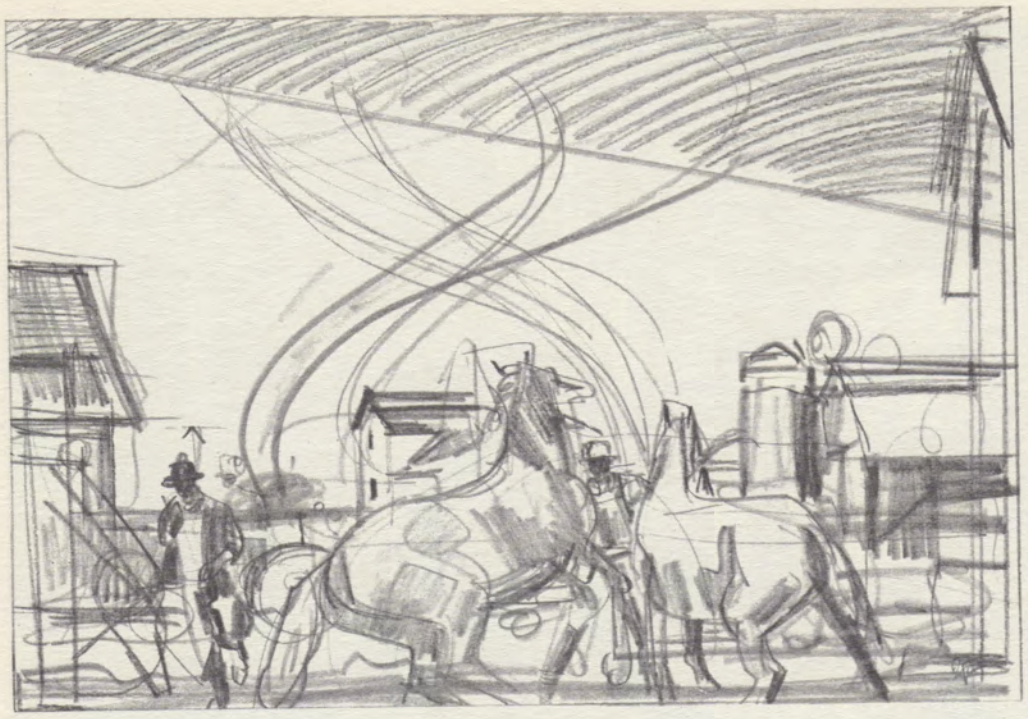

1

The first sketch, with a large soft pencil on tracing pad, must always be free, bold and rhythmic, especially for a subject like this. Thoughts and ideas should always be way ahead and leading the fingers. What follows is bound to modify, not increase spontaneity and vigor which the first sketch has. Attention to detail makes it impossible to avoid this. Here I had not decided which way the twister would twist, but guided by the rhythmic movement of the horse in the center, the decision from left to right was inevitable.

Tornado

2 This second and final sketch still contains a lot of the original vigor. this is a violent dramatic subject, and any noodling at this stage would be fatal. You see also that the movement of the running figures on the left, away from the twister, is equally inevitable, and the straight lines of the buildings on the extreme left and right serve to frame the violent action which is going on between them. These things are done instinctively — not by conscious reasoning, and if you have a thorough background of training which has still allowed you to keep your feeling intact, you will be able to let instinct guide you. It does no harm, however, to know what has been happening. Straining, frightened horses are not things you can feel and draw *solely* from a knowledge of animal anatomy, although such knowledge would be no drawback.

Robert Fawcett

Advertising illustration

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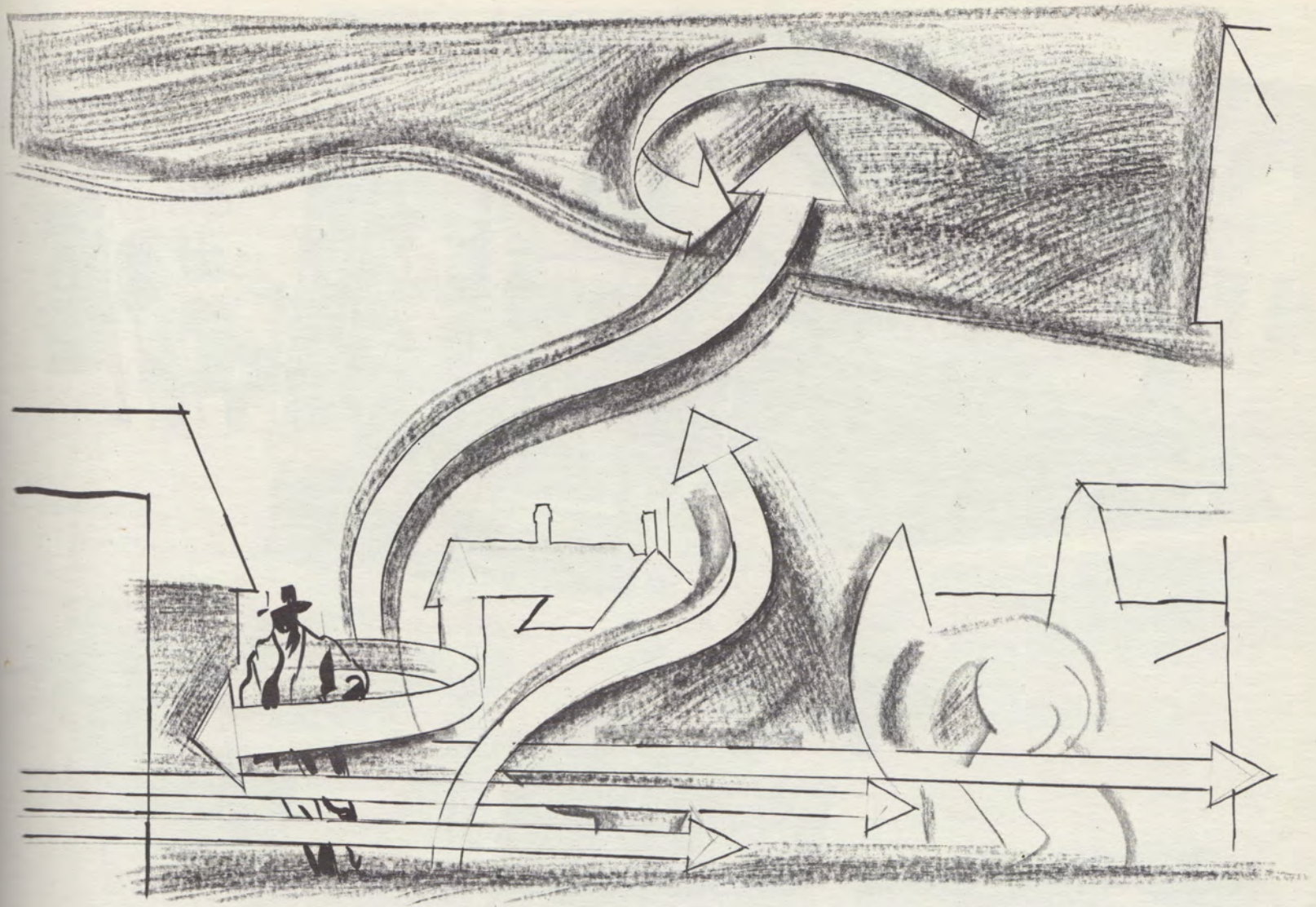

4 In the transition from line to paint, an awareness of spatial structure occurs. When I speak of picture construction, I mean something like this, a block pattern which harnesses and keeps the rhythmic movement from gettting out of hand. I do not actually make diagrams like this for myself, but this shows the quality I strive for.

5 As usual, after tearing a drawing apart, there is little to say of the finish. It was painted in tempera, mostly casein, and then sprayed to give the color more brilliance for reproduction. The foreground is lighted as though by the last sunshine before the tornado hits.

3 There are several rhythms going on in this picture. Some are seen, others are felt. These rhythms are the underlying movements which *suggest* the violent subject matter without identifying it. The knowledge of these is in the back of the mind dictating even the brush strokes. It is not something which you arbitrarily contrive. It is rather an *emphasis* of the subject matter and is dictated by the subject.

Courtesy Carrier Corp.

Robert Fawcett

12 Advertising illustration

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

to love,
away
around trying to spot a hole in the murk—
can hear you over the field now. Get back to
ship settles rapidly... we wait in our little cabin, sweat streaming from our faces. Suddenly
throttles jam forward, 4 screaming props grab huge chunks of air... and the ground operator yells frantically: "Pull up!
walking... but men must fly
Brush and ink, wash and opaque—for newspaper.
Pen and ink and green dye.
Full color opaque. Shiny, clean, precise.
Line and wash. Humorous.
Black and white opaque. Serious mood.
Brush and ink, colored inks and dyes.
Brush and lampblack spot, with second color.
Brush and ink with color washed over. Effect of a pallid steel engraving.
Brush and black ink, opaque.
Ink with pen and brush, color and analine dyes. Dramatic.
Opaque color, technical.
Today I purchased the... in these pants. For in... appearance, it behooves... well regarded to me

It is revealing for me to look back on a few of the advertising drawings I have done. I find I have worked in a great many styles and mediums for many purposes. I believe that some of this work has been more than just keeping the pot boiling, although much was repetitious, and therefore a waste of time as far as self-development went. However, few things you will do in advertising can be considered time wasted, for every small drawing adds to your experience. If you avoid sitting back with satisfaction and do not allow ambition to grow dim, then commercial illustration should not retard your progress toward a kind of illustration which is more satisfying, or affect adversely, pictures you will do for yourself.

How I make a picture

by R.F. ROBERT FAWCETT

lesson 9

MEMBER OF THE FACULTY OF

Institute of Commercial Art, *Inc.*

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Robert Fawcett

2 The opaque medium

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On this and the next two pages are shown three paintings I did for myself, in casein tempera. It is with things like this that one can really explore the medium.

The Opaque Medium

It is a common habit of illustrators to experiment with different techniques and media. This may be due to the peculiarity of our profession, which, in good times, requires that the artist be at his drawing board or easel day after day, with deadlines staring him in the face and with the creative urge too often absent. The fact that his product today is expected to resemble that of yesterday is an inhibiting thing, and not a condition which allows for even normal aesthetic experiment and development. (This tendency toward repetition is perhaps the one thing which makes commercial art "commercial.") When this occurs, the boredom of repetition is somewhat relieved by trying a different medium.

Some illustrators compensate for these restrictions by finding release as competent Sunday painters, having to be careful, however, to keep this outlet from influencing the Monday morning stint. But if switching media from job to job is not just an eccentric fancy, and stems instead from the character of the job in hand, then it too can be a stimulating thing. The subject matter does suggest the medium in most cases, and when it is, for want of a better word, what I would call "masculine," the thicker opaque medium of tempera or oil color is usually indicated.

I have said earlier that trying to categorize into different media results in quite arbitrary divisions,

Robert Fawcett

The opaque medium

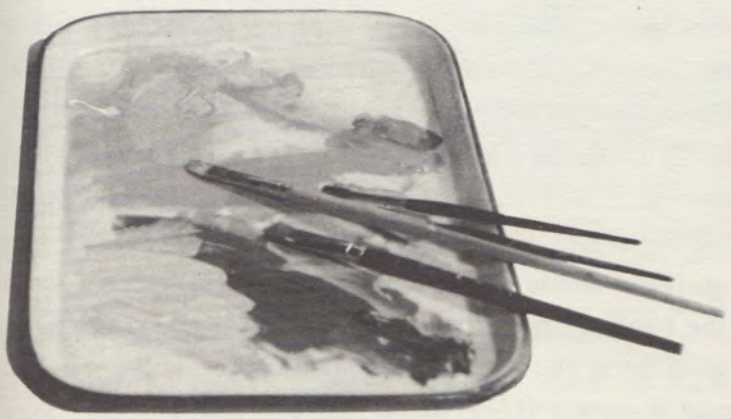
Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

that the problems of the picture maker are the same whatever medium he chooses. Yet I know that I have often got myself into bad messes because I switched media without making the mental adjustment. For commercial illustration, and for convenience here, I think oil and tempera can be examined as one. I have used both, and sometimes combined them; but now I stick to tempera fairly consistently because it dries so quickly, and in the currently popular use of casein tempera we have a medium which, in its opacity and quality of drying waterproof, is invaluable to the illustrator once he has mastered its peculiarities.

I use casein paints for painting in tempera. They have a nice, wide range of colors; they dry quickly and there is no "bleeding through" in overpainting. In a day or two they are, for all practical purposes, waterproof (as I have found when I needed to remove a large painted area and have been forced at last to resort to a razor blade!). When dry, they look chalky; but the brilliance can be regained with varnish or some other glossy preservative.

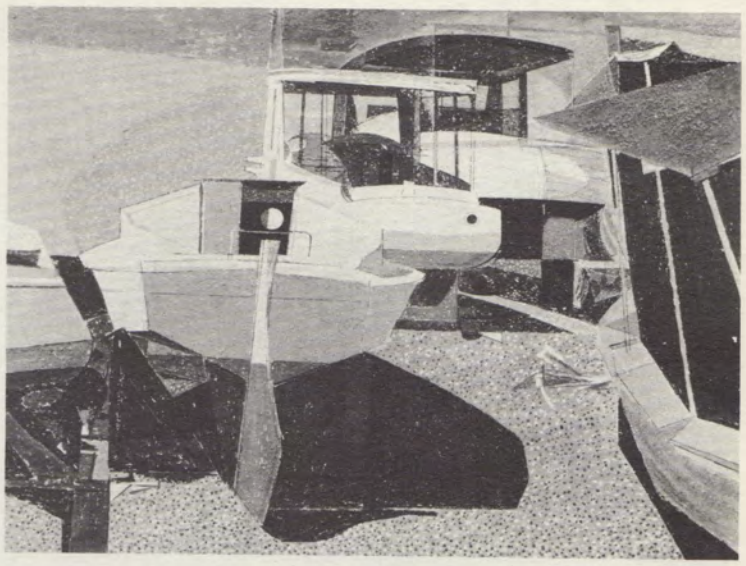
There is no denying, however, that casein is a tricky medium and far different both in feel and effect than ordinary opaque water color. Sable brushes allowed to dry without being thoroughly cleaned of it will soon be ruined, and a good soap and water cleansing is desirable at the end of each day, sometimes oftener.

Casein not only dries quickly on your painting, but also on the palette, and I advise squeezing a smaller amount of color more frequently to offset this. I use ordinary enamel butcher's trays for palettes. These are easily cleaned with a good brush and water, with the addition of a little solvent if the color has remained for any length of time. A palette of casein color is rarely usable the next day unless you have protected it overnight with a damp cloth or a sheet of wet blotting paper.



Painting in opaque for commercial purposes usually falls into one of three categories — for black and white, black and one color or full color reproduction. In any case, I advise laying out the colors on your palette and painting freely with them just as you might with oil. Painting in black and white usually results in unpleasant bluish grays so it is best to put some burnt umber with the black and mix thoroughly with a palette knife before starting. Do this unless you use the so called illustrator's grays which already have a warm tone that is more pleasant to paint with.

When working for two-color reproduction, if the choice of the second color is left to you, you will choose



either the one color which, with black, gives the greatest color range, or one which has an immediate application to the subject matter of your picture. If, for instance, yours is a colonial subject, and the composition includes British red coats, you might choose a brilliant red for the second color to use on the uniforms, and do the best you can to approximate the rest of the picture content with mixtures of the same red with the black and white. I find that a bright orange gives me the greatest range for two-color reproduction, allowing not only variations of the orange, but also, by mixing,

through the range of browns to black. Where the orange is omitted entirely, the effect of black and white gives me those cool grays with almost a bluish cast. The choice, however, is always one of taste and is dependent entirely on your subject matter. In a night scene, blue or green seems to create the atmosphere immediately; it would be difficult to attain using a hot color.

The technicalities of reproduction are important to understand, and it is the fortunate artist who has spent an apprenticeship in a shop where he has absorbed the principles of color reproduction. The attitude of "Let the engraver worry about it," is all very well, but it can result in some surprising distortions which were never intended.

I like to set out my full color palette in a row around the edge of the tray palette, starting with white on the left, and going through the range of yellows, reds, browns, greens, blues, down to black. If this is always done in the same way, it serves to put some order into

what is not an orderly process. The palette becomes your instrument on which you learn to strike a chord without looking too hard.

Ordinary water color opaque needs a good surface like Whatman or Strathmore, but almost any surface can be used to paint with casein, from paper to canvas. This includes most of the better wallboards, with or without a gesso surface. Wallboard with a coat of casein white is also satisfactory once the white is thoroughly dry. I use Whatman or Strathmore for everything, chiefly because I have it, and also because it is light and easy to send through the mail. I advise you not to get too fouled up experimenting with new surfaces. You can still learn much and make great advances with nothing better than wrapping paper! A preference in surface has chiefly to do with permanence. That is what prompted the old masters in their choosing, and unless you are convinced of the value of your work to posterity you will do better to keep the problem simple. The tactile feeling of tempera is much the same on any surface and it is not a very sensual experience at best.

So much for the technical aspects. The big difference in working in opaque color, rather than the transparent method I have heretofore stressed, is one of *thinking*. For the most part the color is mixed and put down, and that is that. It can be changed and modified, of course, but there will be little or none of the richness which comes of continued overpainting with transparencies. You will probably end as I do by mixing the media and ignoring everything but the final result. I warn you, however, against trying to work with inks and casein, or watercolor and casein, at the same time. Strange things will happen to your brushes, for these media just don't mix. Even using the same water-bowl often sets up this condition. Recently, I have had some success with pictures I have started and finished with opaque tempera, and it is a medium which I think I will use more often as time goes on. It requires precision and a more conscious handling, because little can be left to accident. If for no other reason than this, it is good practice, and your control of pictures will be more complete for having experimented with it. I was prompted to it by a desire to kill that black line underpainting in the transparent method. In full color paintings I found this latter to be a convention which, although it made for control and an orderly procedure, still needed to be lost at the end if I was to realize the full color potential. With tempera, *pure color is substituted for the black line,* and the result, after varnishing, resembles a small oil painting. There is no limit to the extent one can go in modeling and refining, but in this lesson I stress the main characteristics of the medium, leaving you to go as far as you like, in the hope that you will discover a way of setting things down that will be distinctly yours.

Robert Fawcett

The opaque medium

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

The development of a full color illustration in casein

A page in full color for a story illustration, in casein tempera, obviously is subject matter which would appeal to any artist to illustrate. The story was a sophisticated yarn concerning an elderly French modern painter, a lovable character with an ethical code peculiarly his own. As this scene occurs in his studio in the south of France, I tried to keep the interior high and airy with no gloom. A studio was easy to visualize. My problem was chiefly one of gesture to convey the character of the painter. In the story, he is involved in a shady deal, although he is far from being a shady character. He loves his own paintings and cannot understand why he should be deprived of them just because clients have paid for them. He thinks up a scheme whereby they will come into his possession again — a laudable aim. The floor of this studio would not lay flat for me until I introduced the pattern of tile. It seemed to say "France" quickly, as did the beard, the espadrilles and the corduroys of the artist. The stove and smoke-pipe not only give height to the studio, but also add a homey, informal flavor called for by the story.

Robert Fawcett

The opaque medium

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

This is my first and only color sketch, a doodle carried a bit further. After a few rough scratches to indicate position, I squeezed out a palette of casein tempera and painted the sketch freely, with no models or scrap. The intention was to realize as completely as I could the scene as I saw it after reading the manuscript. It is always good practice to do the sketch in the same medium you intend to employ for the finish.

The finished painting in an early stage. You can see that I am just patterning shapes carefully so that the finish will have order. Shapes in the painting on the easel are being chosen so as to be sure that they allow the old man to silhouette well and be easily distinguishable. Darks are placed above what will be his white beard, more darks behind him to articulate his figure. The top of another easel confuses the head of the younger man, and I later changed this. The composition has been worked out on a tissue pad beforehand and I am now translating a linear pattern to a spatial one. Later these things became instinctive, but at the beginning it is well to know what you are doing.

Robert Fawcett

The opaque medium

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The whole gesture of the character was so important that I show you here how I posed for the figure with my wife. I can only see a pose by doing it, and I believe that by so doing I catch something which is of more importance than the fact that I am rarely the right type facially. I put up with considerable kidding for this habit from my colleagues, who sometimes claim to see me posing for my own illustrations when I happen to have used other models. One must read the manuscript carefully, feel in sympathy with the character to be portrayed, and then abandon all self-consciousness to do this effectively. ("Mugging" is not it.) To me it seems to create a closer identification with the story, and as you see in this example, the things I gain easily outweigh the changes I must make to disguise my own personality.

The photos are examined to see whether they contain the essence of what I am after, and this is done by *drawing from them* all those parts which seem vague or inarticulate, as photos usually are. These rough sketches are my attempts to distill the essence from what I see in the photos, and to reconcile that with my mental picture as I read the manuscript. Actually, the whole pose was the important contribution, as you can see by comparing either of these with the one I tried to visualize in the color sketch, which is stiff, unrelaxed and a trifle forced.

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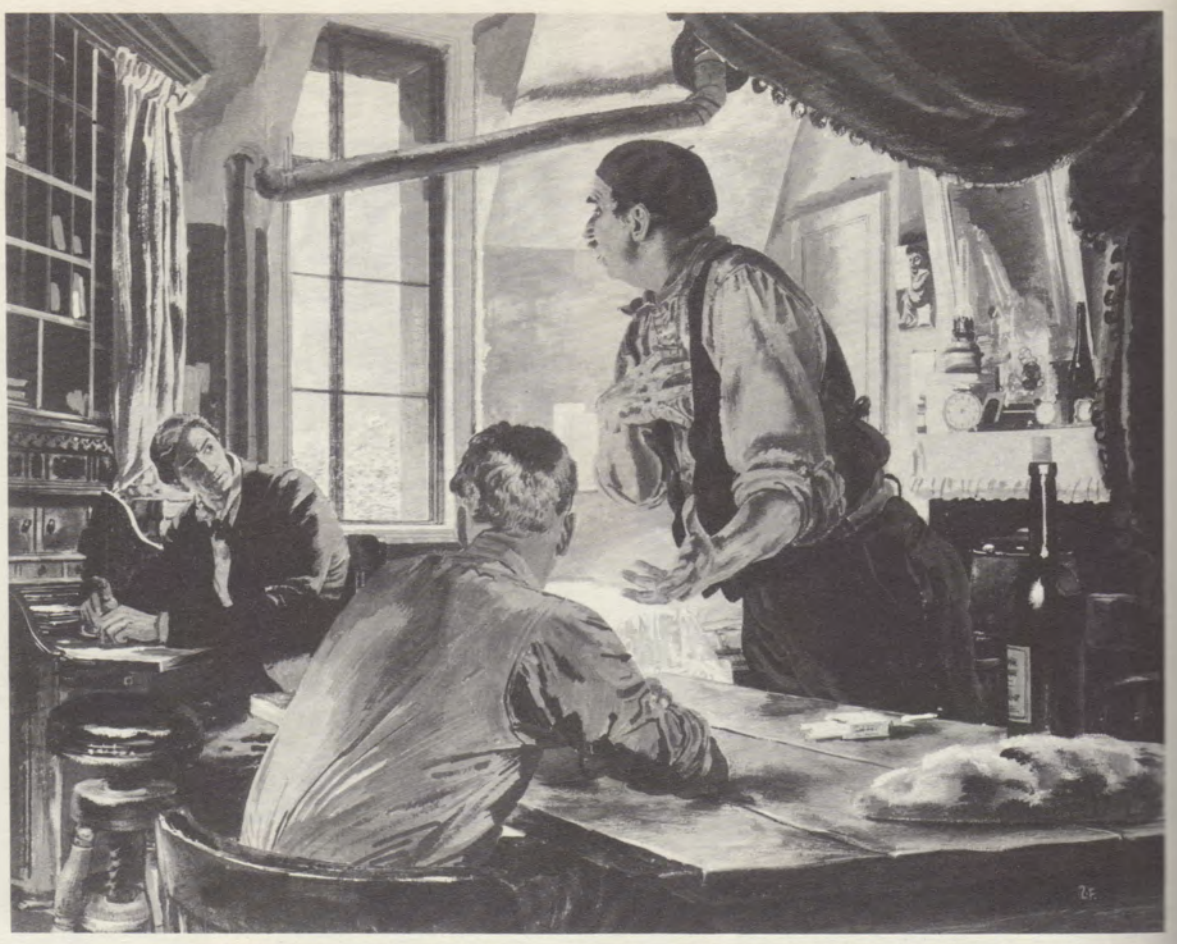
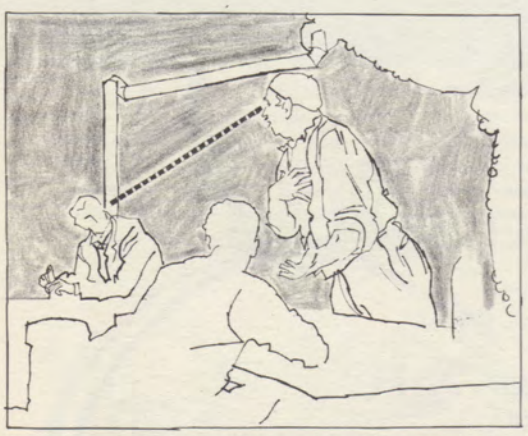
The opaque medium

Pictorial interpretation of a manuscript



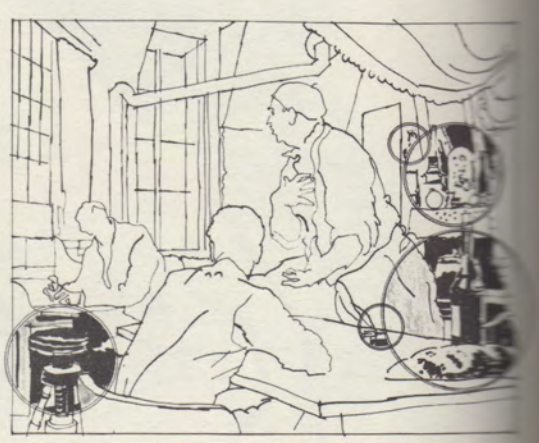
1 You will never find a situation or a scene described as you yourself must visualize it. When the author attempts description it is usually a *literary* observation, foreign to the *visual* seeing which is our language. Then again authors often contradict themselves, and when they do become specific they too often face us with problems of color and decor that just don't work out in pictures. That group of assorted objects on the mantel, the wine bottle and loaf of bread, the yellow package of French cigarettes, (Marylands, they used to be called when I lived in France), and the padded stool on the left — all these are the illustrator's contribution. The line made by the smoke pipe from above the main figure down to the man he is addressing, is something no author could describe — it is the artist's way of supplementing the conversation. A window on the left is suggested by allowing the light to hit the shirt of the back-view figure; this gives the room an added dimension which the confined space does not allow me to show. In tempera as in other media, I work all over, allowing the picture to come together "all of a piece." It is not necessary to work large — the original of this is about 13x15 inches.



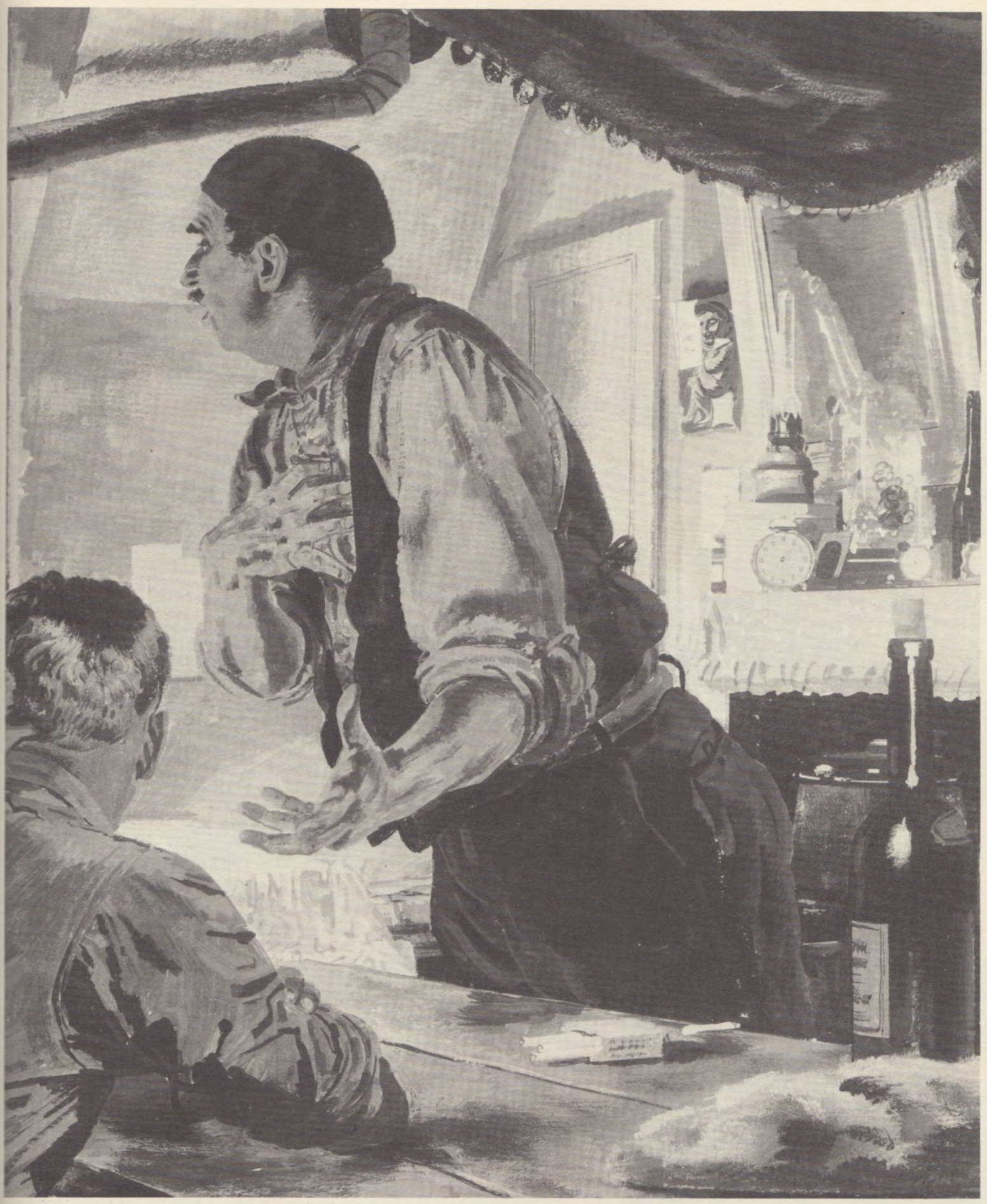
2 Be sure your characters *look* at each other as they converse. Slavishly copying photographs often prevents this. The line of the stove pipe supplements the conversation.

3 The back-view figure, which happens to be that of the hero, acts only as a foreground foil to the main action, helping to concentrate the interest.

4 A solid interior of interesting shapes gives authenticity to the scene. These shapes are designed to contain other shapes made by the figures.



5 All subsidiary details had to be authentically French — the result of research and an acute observation. Never neglect the smallest detail, but keep it back in place.



6 An actual size detail from the tempera illustration shown on the preceding page. I also posed for this excited French character, but the important thing to see in this is how, in painting in an opaque medium, you have to work for textural interest. The background textures change constantly to allow the chief figure to silhouette dramatically. This does not come accidentally. This was in color, so the color was also changing and giving added interest to the whole interior — *an interest over and above that of the objects portrayed.*

Actual size detail.

. . . . "and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock"

Creating texture with casein

This actual size detail is shown to emphasize the design of the shadow shapes in the rocks, and also the texture of casein tempera applied thickly. The scene is lit as though from a momentary burst of sunshine before the storm descends, which makes the approaching rain and lightning behind appear all the more ominous. Not every advertising job exploits the saccharine, but the ones with this amount of freedom for the artist are too few. At the left is a sketch made to go into the layout for presentation purposes.

Robert Fawcett

The opaque medium

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This was a commercial (advertising) drawing of an institutional character, to illustrate a switch on a biblical quotation. The house that was "founded upon a rock" becomes an early American one for domestic consumption. I think a rose embowered suburban reproduction would have been more readily accepted, but this is as big a compromise as I felt like making. An assignment like this, without figures, is nothing but a landscape painting of a house in a storm, and so could be treated with considerable freedom. It is in one color, black, for newspaper reproduction, and the treatment is bold and dramatic. In doing the finished painting above, I merely scaled it to the new size, drew the house fairly carefully, and proceeded to paint freely with the sketch before me. I did not starve my palette, using plenty of paint, and even mixing some sand into it! I did this to add to the texture and at the same time prevent myself from becoming too immersed in detail. (I had never done this before, so I was taking a chance.) In a story scene like this I had to be emphatic in design, because there was a great temptation to slither around in wet casein with brushes and finger tips, and have the result less than pleasing the next day. Much was accidental, especially in the sky, where, when an unearthly effect appeared, I hastened to exploit it. I didn't stoop to painting raindrops, preferring to get the idea over in a broader, more dramatic way.

This is the only scrap I consulted on this job. I wanted to see what shapes lightning takes.

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The opaque medium

A one-figure picture in opaque tempera

Here I repeat a diagram such as I used in Lesson 3, this time as a progression in opaque [illegible]. The one-figure motif gets this over more easily than a more complicated problem, and the [illegible] is the same. There could be a simpler method, that of covering each area with flat grays and [illegible] modeling into them. It is a safer way to work, but better adapted to the conventional opaque [illegible] color than the casein tempera I have used here. Also, there is the danger of producing a [illegible] tional, dry result. Working this way keeps you on your toes, and I recommend it as a way to [illegible] a loose, free painting technique. You may have to work from reference, as I did on this one, [illegible] as a technical exercise try to make the result a *one-figure picture*. Jump around from place to [illegible] designing tonally as I have advocated doing all along. But do not think about technique [illegible]

Here I repeat a diagram such as I used in Lesson 3, this time as a progression in opaque tempera. The one-figure motif gets this over more easily than a more complicated problem, and the procedure is the same. There could be a simpler method, that of covering each area with flat grays and then modeling into them. It is a safer way to work, but better adapted to the conventional opaque water color than the casein tempera I have used here. Also, there is the danger of producing a conventional, dry result. Working this way keeps you on your toes, and I recommend it as a way to develop a loose, free painting technique. You may have to work from reference, as I did on this one, and just as a technical exercise try to make the result a *one-figure picture*. Jump around from place to place, designing tonally as I have advocated doing all along. But do not think about technique to the

...usion of all feeling about *what* you are doing. For instance, in this example I must be *primarily* ...*ed by a desire to portray a quizzically pleasant looking cop who is wondering if it is time to* ...*the station house!* This should never be lost sight of — this human element, without which pic... are arid and impotent. It is better, in fact, to be motivated by this feeling of close association ... the subject right from the beginning, and let the means by which you render it come auto... ...ically. One of the great dangers of all art instruction is the laboring of technique at the expense ... this other and more important quality. I do not want to do the same thing here without warning ... of the dangers. But nothing should hamper the student who is going to be an artist — not ... instruction!

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exclusion of all feeling about *what* you are doing. For instance, in this example I must be primarily *moved by a desire to portray a quizzically pleasant looking cop who is wondering if it is time to call the station house!* This should never be lost sight of — this human element, without which pictures are arid and impotent. It is better, in fact, to be motivated by this feeling of close association with the subject right from the beginning, and let the means by which you render it come automatically. One of the great dangers of all art instruction is the laboring of technique at the expense of this other and more important quality. I do not want to do the same thing here without warning you of the dangers. But nothing should hamper the student who is going to be an artist — not even instruction!

Robert Fawcett

14 The opaque medium

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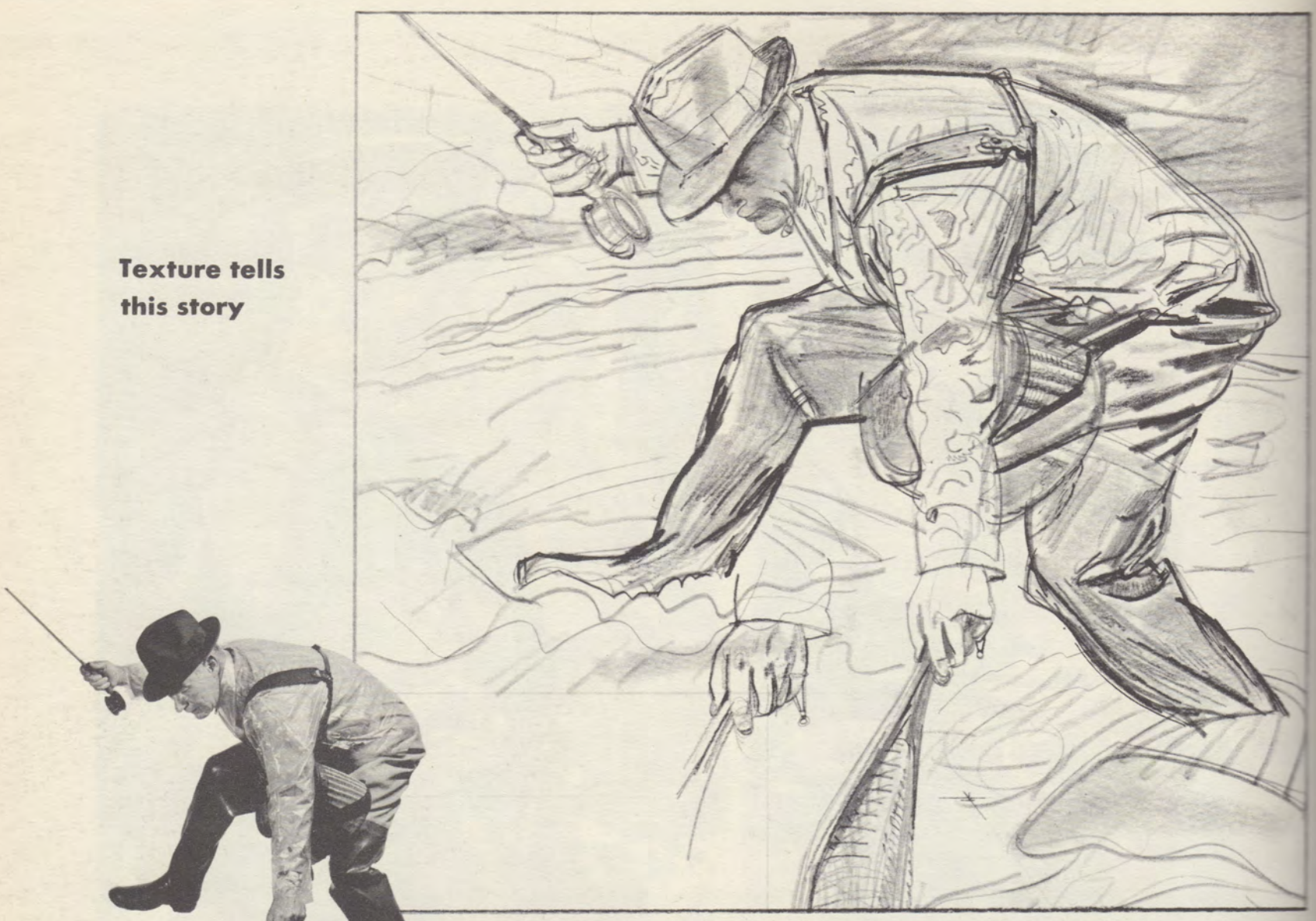
Texture tells this story



1 I am going to keep pounding into you this need for drawing — not only the need for it, but the fun of it. My work recognizes no division between drawing and painting — the latter is merely an extension of the first; because I employ a different medium I do not need a different concept. On the left I show you the photograph and above my study made from it. The photo contains a lot which is exciting. I knew it would because the shooting of it was governed by a sketch I had made and for which a colleague had posed. (He had the advantage of being an angler, which I am not.) I used the photograph as I would a model, selecting, documenting and designing.

2 Because I knew exactly what I was going to do, the rendering of this went fairly easily. Because the jacket is the main element in the illustration this was done first and everything else keyed to it. This is black and white casein tempera, but the drawing does not exploit the qualities of the medium. It could have been done as easily in any opaque water color. As in the ink under-drawing we considered in Lesson 3, I still pattern by light, but this time with varying grays. Because texture was so important, I drew, designing the texture as crisply as possible to offset the modifications that would be unavoidable in reproduction.

3 I show you this an hour later in its progress to demonstrate this method of working from part to part, completing as I go along. This is the confidence of having planned thoroughly, and the knowledge that in a one-figure composition everything else can be made to take its place later if the figure is as I want it to be — cheating, perhaps, but it is usually true of all single figure pictures. This kind of virtuosity is seldom possible in more complicated compositions and it is not particularly desirable. As I have said earlier, advertising drawings differ from editorial illustrations in that the simplicity of the appeal and content allows for a greater degree of emphasis in execution.

Robert Fawcett

The opaque medium

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4 Actual size detail.

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The opaque medium

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New angle
for anglers
When fish are biting, no ardent fisherman would ever admit to being rained out. But fishing in the rain used to be a mighty uncomfortable way to have fun.
Not any more. Fishing togs made of modern vinyl plastics are just right for fishing. They're light as a fly, waterproof as a fish, and their "seamless" seams are fused together by heat without any stitching.
Barrett "Elastex" plasticizers made from coal-tar give these new plastic fabrics much of their handsome appearance, soft texture, and resistance to water, grease and stains. This is one more example of the many ways in which Barrett basic products serve you.
THE BARRETT DIVISION
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ONE OF AMERICA'S GREAT BASIC BUSINESSES
Coal-tar Chemicals . . . Wood Preservatives . . . Building Materials
Paving Materials . . . Protective Coatings . . . Nitrogen Products
Barrett

5 You see now that it is not a question of the use of photos, it is the use to which you put them, what you want them for and what you are able to extract from them that is important. In this finish you see how much of the original design has been modified — perhaps too much, but this is an advertising drawing which I am using primarily to demonstrate the use of texture. All of this drawing is composed of varying texures. The key for this was set for me because the client is advertising the virtue of this particular rain jacket, the chief *visual characteristic of which is its texture*. It has no form, no particular shape, and if I missed its texture I would have missed everything. But everything else in the drawing is texture also. The water, flicks of dark on a lighter gray with white spots of rain bubbles. The boots are black shapes with high lights which add up to the texture of wet rubber, and, behind, the texture of rocks and some foliage. Nothing is drawn solidly, but only by its textural equivalent, yet the final result is convincing as a scene. Observe that no human element enters this. Although a figure dominates the scene his features are reduced in shadow, and the whole is as much an impersonal landscape as the storm scene we considered earlier. For that reason it is pretty much a technical exercise, but one which performs the function for which it was designed, to advertise the appearance and use of a waterproof jacket.

6 To me this composition analysis is the most important step in the whole thing, the way a single figure in action is to fill the page space. The angle relationships, with the one downthrust vertical arm, are the compositional elements upon which everything else is based, and the photo (on page 14) was taken with this in mind. The figure surrounds the type space at the lower left, which is then included in the architecture which holds everything within the outside rectangle. Action loses force if it has nothing firm from which to spring, like an athlete who tries to jump from a loose or insecure footing. This is precisely the way I make the picture edges function — a firm purchase from which my elements move. Look at this carefully, as I have reconstructed things which became obscured in the finish.

How I make a picture

by R.F. ROBERT FAWCETT

lesson 10

MEMBER OF THE FACULTY OF

Institute of Commercial Art, *Inc.*

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The motivating idea and the serial

The Motivating Idea and the Serial

With this lesson I start a recapitulation to amplify some of what has gone before and which I feel is of the greatest importance for the illustrator who is not content to regard his profession just as a "living."

I have titled this lesson "The Motivating Idea" because what I will endeavor to describe is just that — *the amorphous yet very real idea around which the picture is conceived, and upon which it is built.* It is not an easy thing to describe in words, and I try whenever possible to demonstrate it with diagrams. We who are artists are lucky — when words fail we can draw pictures. When the idea to be transmitted is sufficiently abstract we might do better to *begin* by drawing, using words only to amplify a visual idea.

Almost anything can be a "motivating idea." It can be a dramatic concept or it can be a compositional plan. It can be a mood, a directional movement within the picture, a concept of color harmony or an idea of a page layout. It is, in short, that indefinable something which starts us working with confidence, to a realization on paper of a symbol which was not there before. By it we endeavor to stimulate a reaction in the onlooker similiar to that which prompted us. To me, it is the initial stimulus which determines whether the picture is to be vital and alive or dull and academic.

The painter of pictures, say the landscape painter, is moved to create by something seen. If he is a good painter, the motivation is a plastic one — either a color harmony, a form relationship or a combination of both. Figures and objects are introduced less for their actual connotations than for what he feels is a necessary plastic contribution. The painter does not need the "woman" in his picture, for instance, but he does need the color or shape of her costume. The group of houses he introduces has little interest to the architect, but it has great interest for the painting enthusiast, because of its color, its shape and the part it plays in the final composition.

The figure painter, or a painter of portraits, could be moved by a color harmony or discord also, but the portraitist is more likely to respond to a singular character. This original response becomes the motif around which the picture proceeds, even though this is usually a quite unconscious process, guided chiefly by feeling.

The illustrator is usually motivated by a literary idea. (Except in that kind of human interest illustration used on the covers of some magazines. Even then, artistic considerations are usually subordinate to the story idea.) The illustrative artist cannot depart too far from the "natural" or the commonly accepted, no matter how imperative this need may be from the aesthetic viewpoint. Within these limitations, however, he still has a great deal of latitude, in terms of picture organization, in purifying form, in color invention and color distortion, all of which will find a ready acceptance in the lay public. This public rarely rebels except when, as it says, "things don't *look real,*" by which it usually means that it is conscious of a distortion of natural forms. I find this quite understandable, especially when the incident being portrayed is one which, as descriptive writing, involves no great strain on one's credibility. What the illustrator is usually called upon to supply is not a re-creation, but merely an amplification; to fill out and to add reality when words prove inadequate or deficient. Above all else, the picture should be provocative, and one of the things which makes a picture provocative is the subject of this lesson.

Robert Fawcett

The motivating idea and the serial

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Pictorial composition

It is difficult to illustrate the kind of thinking that often precedes a picture, but here is a sample taken from the Basic Course. It is more roundabout than most, but it serves as an example of the kind of thing I prefer to call the motivating idea. In this western story, a tenderfoot, out practicing with his revolver, is surprised by a westerner who later proves to be a good friend. The tenderfoot, a young man, is apprehensive of his prowess as a marksman, for he knows that he is going to be called upon to defend himself later in a gun duel with a villainous character, who so far has not appeared in the story. The following picture sequence shows the growth of the visual idea – the tentative beginning, and finally the idea as it jelled. The illustration was scheduled for two pages – a spread; but inasmuch as the text and title are to take a large part of one of the pages, the action must be confined to the other one, leaving the text page with large simple shapes from which a mortise can be cut for type and the title superimposed without radically spoiling the picture. A line through the middle of these rough sketches reminds one of the "gutter," where the pages meet, for the illustration must be designed to avoid having an important element come at this point and be cut in half when it appears in the magazine.

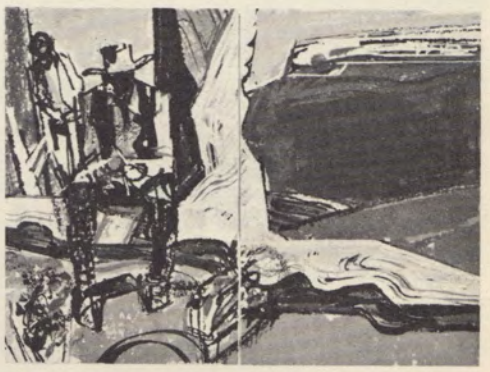
1 This first composition *divides* the characters too much and is the situation a moment *after* the original one of surprise. The two are now talking calmly, and the composition lacks tension.

2 This one brings them more together and leaves the right-hand page clear for type, but still it is not a very exciting conception and was soon discarded.

3 The idea of the secondary character coming from behind seems a better solution. It is now a question of organizing the other elements to "place" the scene definitely in rocky western terrain.

4 A fallen dead tree on which the important character is sitting contemplating his target seems better than the rocks in picture 3. The secondary character is still coming in from behind, with the other one as yet unaware of his presence.

5 Now it begins to boil down to essentials. The dead tree assumes more importance but the figures are too small — the composition is not dynamic enough.



6 Finally, I bring the main character closer to the reader, make the dead tree a part of the design and allow the unobserved westerner to lean casually against a rock further back. Large hills in shadow solve the problem of simple shapes for the right hand page.

7 The finished picture. It has simplicity, an element of drama, and all the possible complications which we anticipated at the beginning have been avoided. This is an example of one way to consider the growth of the motivating idea.

Courtesy Cosmopolitan Magazine

Robert Fawcett

4 The motivating idea and the serial

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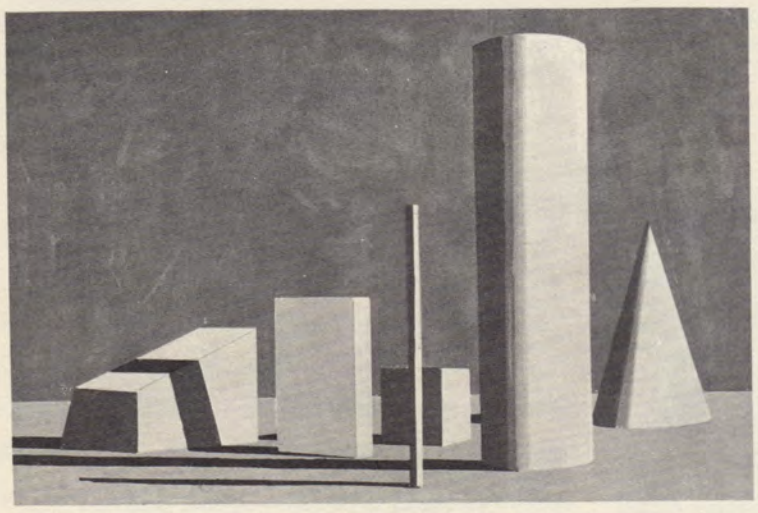
The search for a symbol

The illustrator reading a manuscript, or pondering a problem of advertising illustration, should always be searching for that symbol on which to build his own conception. Until he finds it he would be better advised to wait, rather than to resort to a pedestrian solution. If this latter becomes a habit it will surely stamp him among the art directors as a routine illustrator — a mechanic.

I assume that few students are willing to become routine producers consciously, and the alternative is the measure of the artist's stature. That is why this is such a difficult point to make, and also why one is embarrassed in a course like this at being limited to one's own work for examples.

The situation. There is a kind of illustration termed "symbolic," which gives to subject matter a mood of unreality. I forget the subject of this one, but it obviously had to do with building. It is desirable to create a quiet, other-worldly atmosphere.



Motivation. *The unreality was best suggested by seeing the subject matter in the setting sun. The low light source casts long shadows and simplifies all modelling. Once the decision to do it this way is reached (by imagining the effect on simple objects), it is an easy matter to symbolize the figure and building activity in the same way.* The motivating idea is a time of day on a flat limitless terrain.

I can only try to describe to you the feeling I sometimes experience, and you will then know if you find it reminiscent.

Drawings are seldom subjected to this searching analysis, but the appraisal "swell drawing" is often an unconscious feeling that the quality I describe is present — that the artist had found his symbol and the resultant drawing reflects his confidence. After looking at hundreds of student drawings I know that this is the ingredient usually lacking, and it is a lack which no amount of technical excellence disguises.

Perhaps one reason for this lack is that the absence of pressure upon the amateur allows him to dawdle. Unlimited time tempts him to substitute energetic but uninspired application for that revelatory flash which would make everything positive and clear. Or it may be that only long experience develops that extra sensitivity, the insight to recognize the idea when it appears.

The greatest danger in commercial illustration is repetition, and the boredom and loss of interest which inevitably follow. The history of illustrative art is full of examples of illustrators who, on the strength of a big success, turned into super-mechanics, only to be shocked and surprised when public enthusiasm gave way to apathy. This is even truer when the original success was a production of some distinction.

I know of no better way to avoid this repetition than *to determine to wait for the particular solution to each problem.* I have said earlier that a good feeling to have is one which sees each commission as a new experience — without reference, as far as possible, to anything you have done before. It is difficult, I admit, under the pressure of time limitations, and with the repetitious fiction we are given to illustrate, to keep one's product fresh and inventive. As we read manuscripts we recognize the appearance of situations identical or similar to those we have had to deal with over a period of years. Almost inevitably the first picture idea which occurs to us is equally repetitious graphically, and one must be on the alert to avoid falling into the trap. I don't know why it is, but when the artist starts pot-boiling it is more readily apparent than when the writer does so.

I am all too conscious of this after an experience at a local artist's club to which I belong. As entertainment after dinner, six of us were elected to make draw-

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The motivating idea and the serial

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

The situation. The story was a short piece by Sinclair Lewis, a character study of an American expatriate, who returns to live in Florence, Italy, after the war, only to find it sadly changed. The writer is satirically critical of a rather stupid character.

Motivation. *There is no action to illustrate. This is a character portrait. The elderly gent is a stupid reactionary trying to find ease and a haven from life by living abroad. "Florence" and "portrait" suggest the portraits in the Uffizzi Museum in that city. Depict the character with all his narrowness in a Florentine manner? Why not study the characteristics of old Florentine frames and paint the gent into a medieval setting (with emphasis on the frame) — the setting in which he likes to see himself? Paint the frame with utmost realism, to contrast with the unreality of his whole outlook. A fake Florentine.*

ings on large sheets of paper in the manner of each other's work. When Al Parker was through caricaturing *my* method of working I recognized all the clichés I had fallen into. The next day I was quite unable to complete a half-finished drawing which was in my studio, and I abandoned it for a fresh start — this despite the fact that Parker's was one of the funniest performances I have ever witnessed. It was a good therapy, for colleagues are quick to recognize repetitious characteristics in each other's work. I think that if groups of artists got together periodically, and in a spirit of fun did things like this with each other, it would be mutually profitable as well as amusing.

It may be difficult for you to realize why I emphasize the danger of employing cliches in your drawings, but they are as obnoxious as cliches in writing or conversation, and a sure sign that the creative spirit is temporarily absent, or certainly not functioning at its best. In your work you will develop "style." It is impossible to avoid, but at all times try to keep that style down at the finger tips, and keep the original inventive thinking free and spontaneous. In this way your work will continue to have freshness, and at the same time carry an individual stamp.

Variety is the thing for which to strive. Try to avoid too great a similarity in your concepts, even though the fiction you have to illustrate falls into just that error. Working professionally you will find yourself being "typed" by the art directors of publications, chiefly because it is easier, for them, to play it safe that way. A romantic "he and she" piece goes to "so-and-so" automatically, a mystery to another, a period story to a third. The humorous manuscript goes to the illustrator who has made a success in a comic vein, but who has always "yearned to play Hamlet!"

From the publications' point of view it is a way to keep a continuity in the appearance of its book, and to avoid experimentation wherever experiment is liable to complicate publication deadlines. But you can readily see in this the machine of industry in action, trying to make cogs of the creative spirit. While you will be told that in choosing commercial illustration as a livelihood you must automatically subordinate your creation to a larger end, the publications which demand this to excess are the ones which are faced with periodic revamping of their whole editorial set-up, when falling circulation figures indicate that standardization has been carried too far. Artists and writers also, are often the goats in the shakeup, so it is the better part of discretion always to, in the words of Shakespeare, "Thine own self be true." There is a way to co-operation without becoming a menial.

It is perhaps untimely to state the need for artistic self-assertion to those whose sole aim at the moment is to see their productions in print, especially with the economic pressure so insistent, and I will qualify what I have said by reminding you that this is the "long view," and the result only of my personal experience.

I will try to accompany the examples I show you in this lesson with the ruminations which would accompany the search for what I describe here as the motivating idea.

Robert Fawcett

6 The motivating idea and the serial

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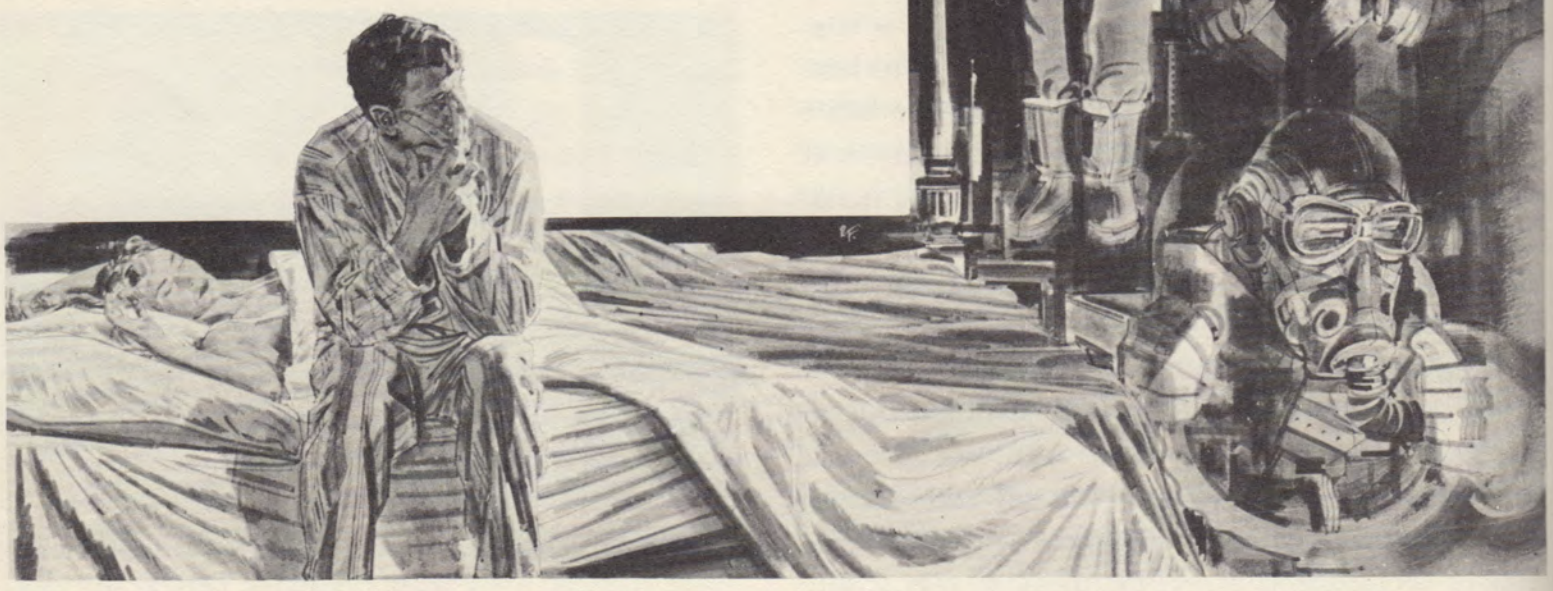
Situation. An ex-flyer experiencing a nightmare of his war experiences. I can use two pages in full color.

Motivation. *A man just lying in bed awake could convey anything. How make it explicit? Combine the character, with his wife beside him, and the dream. Take a full page and contrast horizontal lying figures with vertical visions of the nightmare? For some reason this does not seem to convey the idea clearly enough. Different page layout might give added element to work with. Discard this for a new concept.*

Second attempt. *Take picture across two pages. Keep dream on the right, reality on the left, to emphasize the division. Does one dream in color? Psychiatrists say you can or not, whichever you wish, which sounds reasonable. Now I have horizontal and upright elements as part of the page layout. Will emphasize all horizontals on left and play up all verticals on the right. I will compromise with color in nightmare by keeping it a warm monotone. A break in horizontals by sitting the boy on edge of bed, head turned towards dream. (Ties him in with vision.) Sleeping wife is unaffected by it (it is his dream, not hers).* Example of the use of layout to give emphasis to the picture concept, and gradual formation of the motivating idea.



Robert Fawcett

The motivating idea and the serial

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Situation. In occupied Paris during the war. A man of the Resistance leaning on the bar of the cafe is being told sotto voce by the French owner that he is being watched from behind.

Motivation. *No one in his right mind would turn around and face the enemy observer. He would remain nonchalant — carry on — perhaps try to see the danger reflected in the mirror. But a French cafe mirror would be obscured by bottles, if not grime. Nevertheless he would not turn his head. Try to see around them, through them, without making a suspicious move. This then became the motif — the disarming row of bottles and their immediate reflection in the glass. I put myself in the position of the character I was illustrating and concentrated on the tense situation.* I would try to look beyond those bottles, and the bottles became the motivating idea for the picture.

Incidentally this is the way I painted the bottles. I set up a mirror on a table in the studio, and placed a selection of (French) liquor bottles before it, trying to reproduce as nearly as possible the way it would have looked in the cafe. Then I painted them freely, directly into a picture in which I had already decided upon the figure placement.

Robert Fawcett

The motivating idea and the serial

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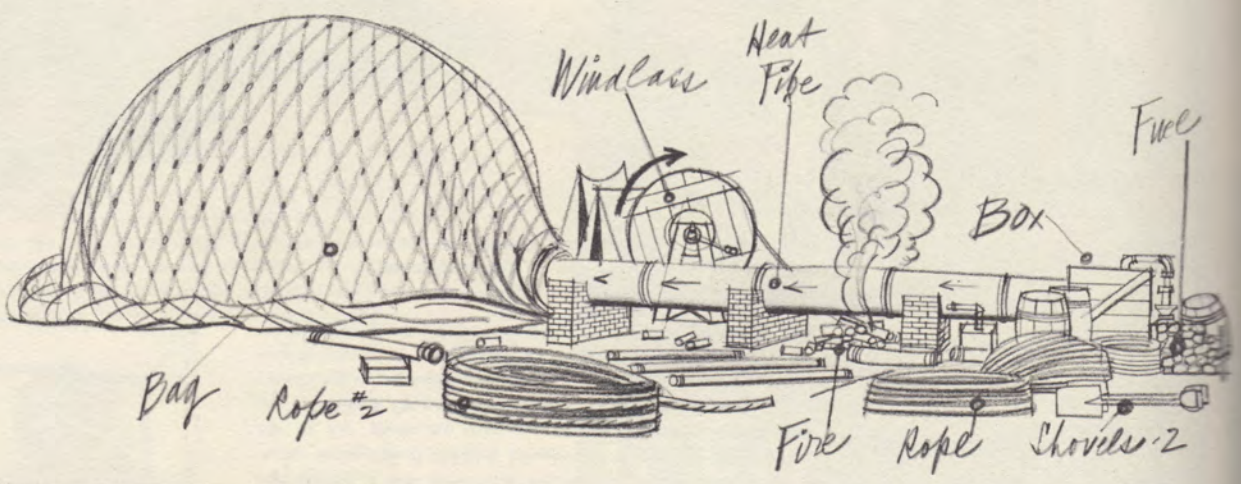
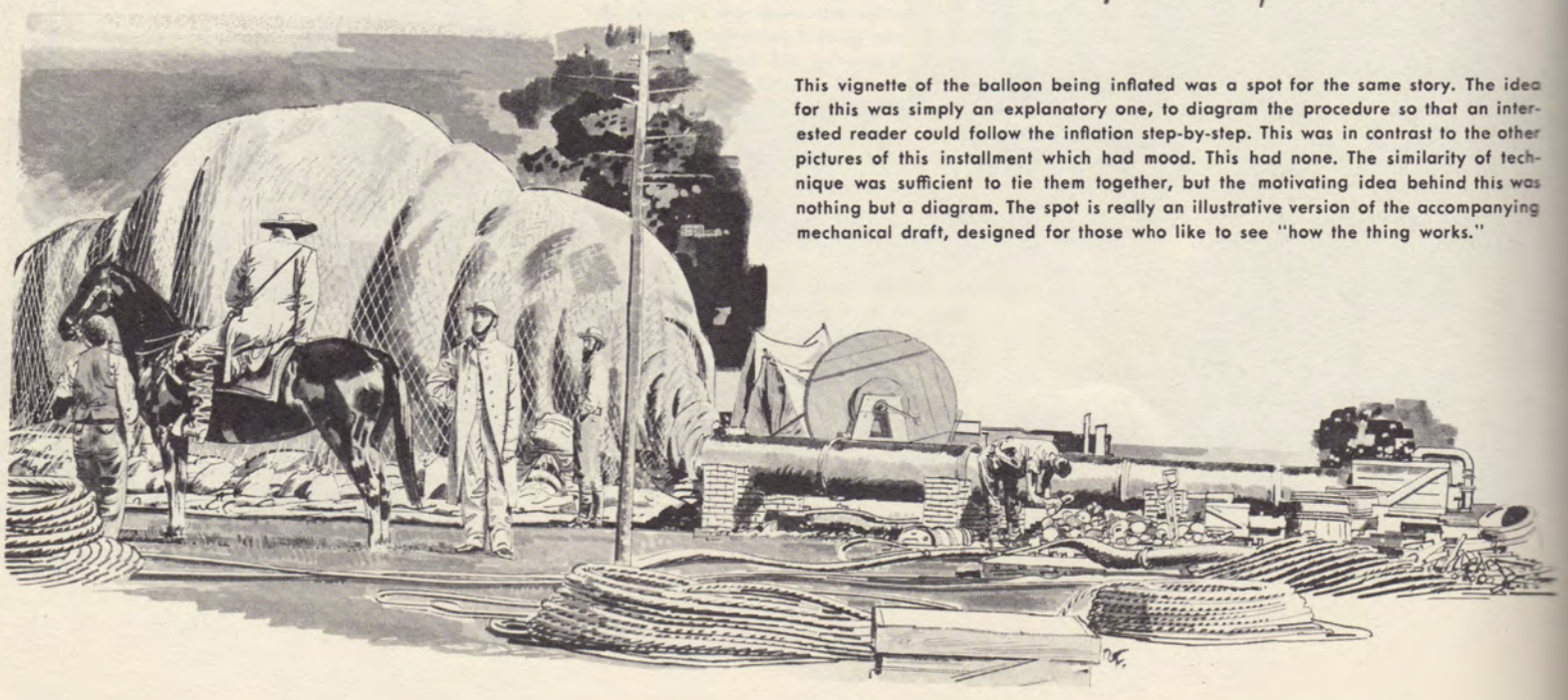
Situation. A slightly nervous Confederate volunteer is about to go aloft in a primitive observation balloon.

Motivation. *It is dark and the Confederate figures would be standing around watching. How does the hero feel? This is his first ascent. He is undoubtedly nervous but putting a good face on it. Where is the balloon? Up out of the picture. How do I know this? Ropes would be hanging down from the bag. If he is nervous what would be his obvious gesture? To look upward, of course, at the bag on which his life will depend. This glance upward and the ropes together create a vertical movement.* We will place emphasis on this — put in additional parallel ropes, and the whole upward movement becomes the motivating idea.





This vignette of the balloon being inflated was a spot for the same story. The idea for this was simply an explanatory one, to diagram the procedure so that an interested reader could follow the inflation step-by-step. This was in contrast to the other pictures of this installment which had mood. This had none. The similarity of technique was sufficient to tie them together, but the motivating idea behind this was nothing but a diagram. The spot is really an illustrative version of the accompanying mechanical draft, designed for those who like to see "how the thing works."

Robert Fawcett

The motivating idea and the serial

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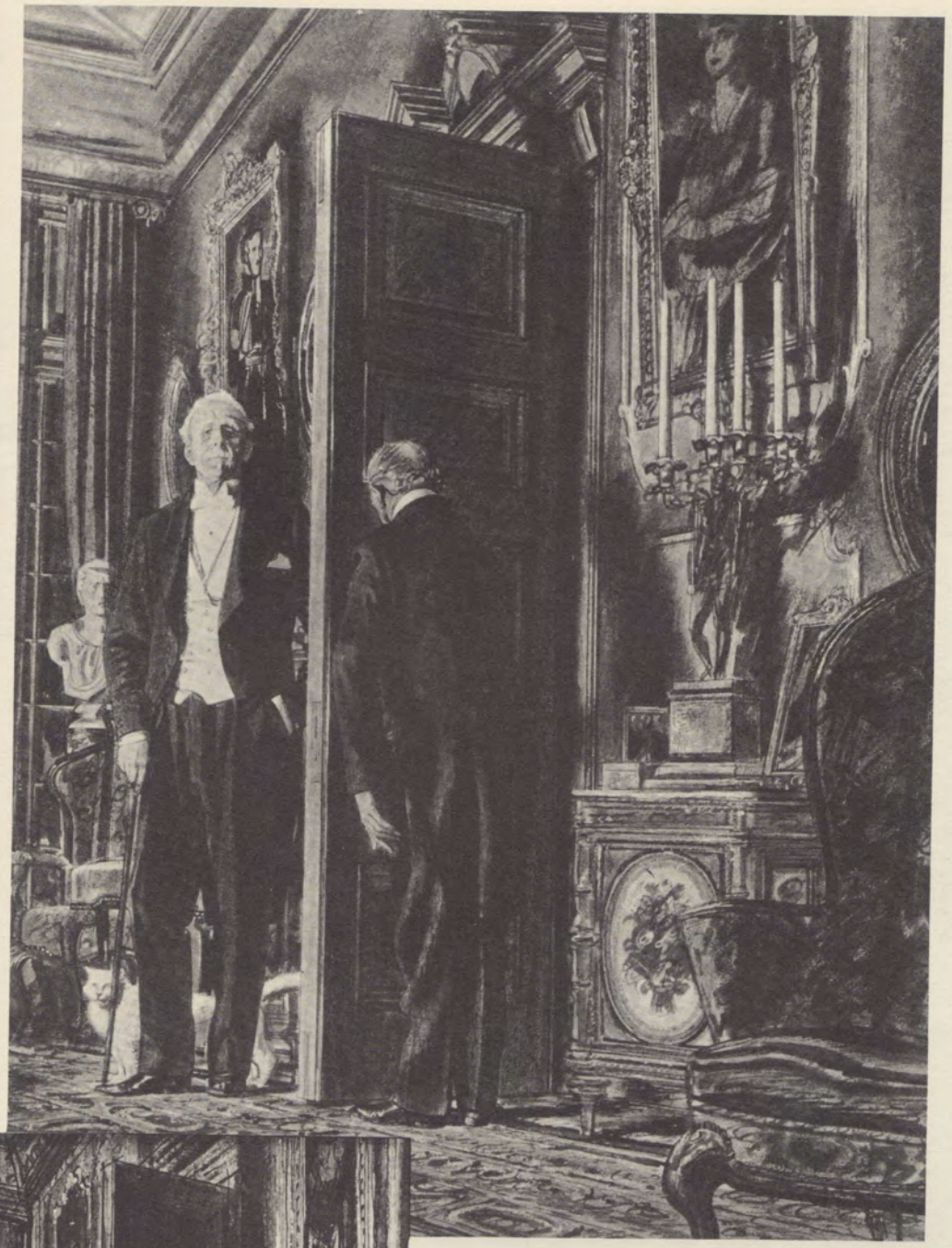
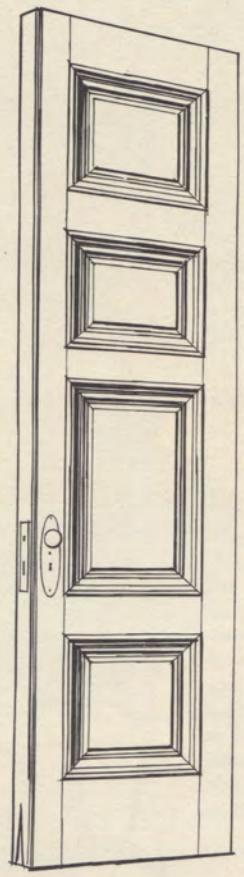


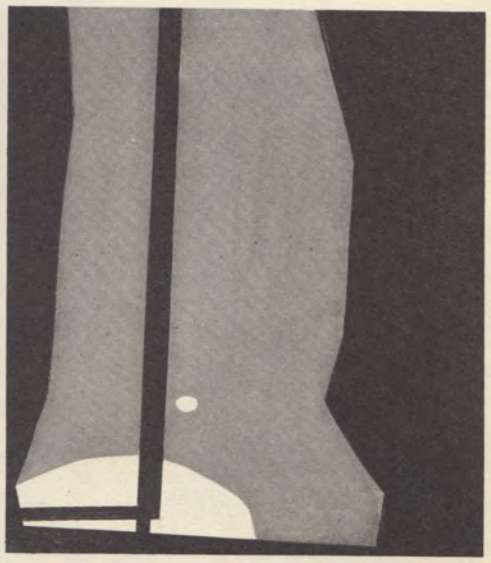
The situation. It is the first appearance of the central character around whose later death the whole story revolves. A white cat is at his feet and a butler attends the door. The manuscript describes his entry into a room full of people — slow, dignified, impressive.

Motivation. *How would I feel in a similar situation — anticipating the entry of this famous old actor, a man of great reputation whom I have never seen before except over the footlights. I think perhaps a hush would come over the assembly as the door opens. Could I emphasize the hush by emphasizing the size of the door? A high door also suggests a dignified, lush interior. I will let nothing interfere with this — it makes the effrontery of the accompanying white cat all the more apparent, contrasting with the dignified old personage. Motivating idea for the whole picture becomes the door. The figure-cat ties up with this, and all the rest of the interior becomes a frame to this original motive.*

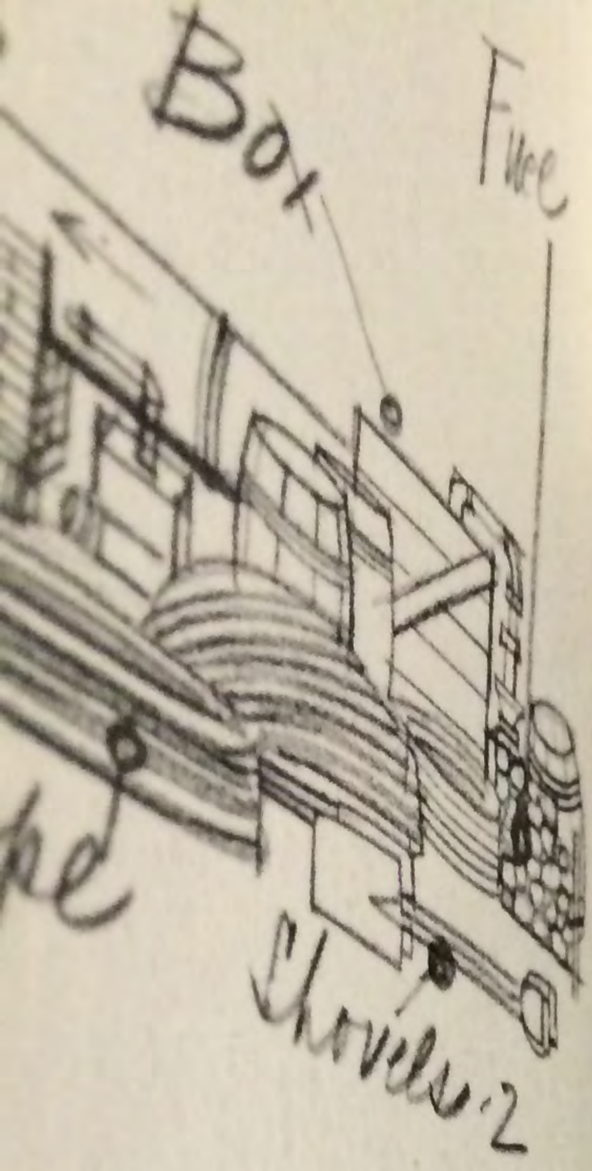


s an aside, I am going back to Lesson 1 for a moment, the doodle. The doodle for this illustration is reproduced *slightly less than actual size*, to show you how I was able to realize the finished full-page on this small scale. The original of the final drawing was 14 by 18 inches. You can go through all the motions of making a picture in this size, limited only by your ability to work into it in detail. A full page illustration is not liable to get out of control when you see it as completely as this before you start.

Situation. Stealthy figure seen from house, approaching with a flashlight.



Motivation. *Night flattens out all modelling, and the framing curtains puts one in the position of the threatened. Cannot identify the figure — see only the moving flashlight. That is sinister enough. Inability to see much detail leaves one with an abstract design of three tones, so approach it from this angle and* let the over-all simple shapes become the motivating idea.



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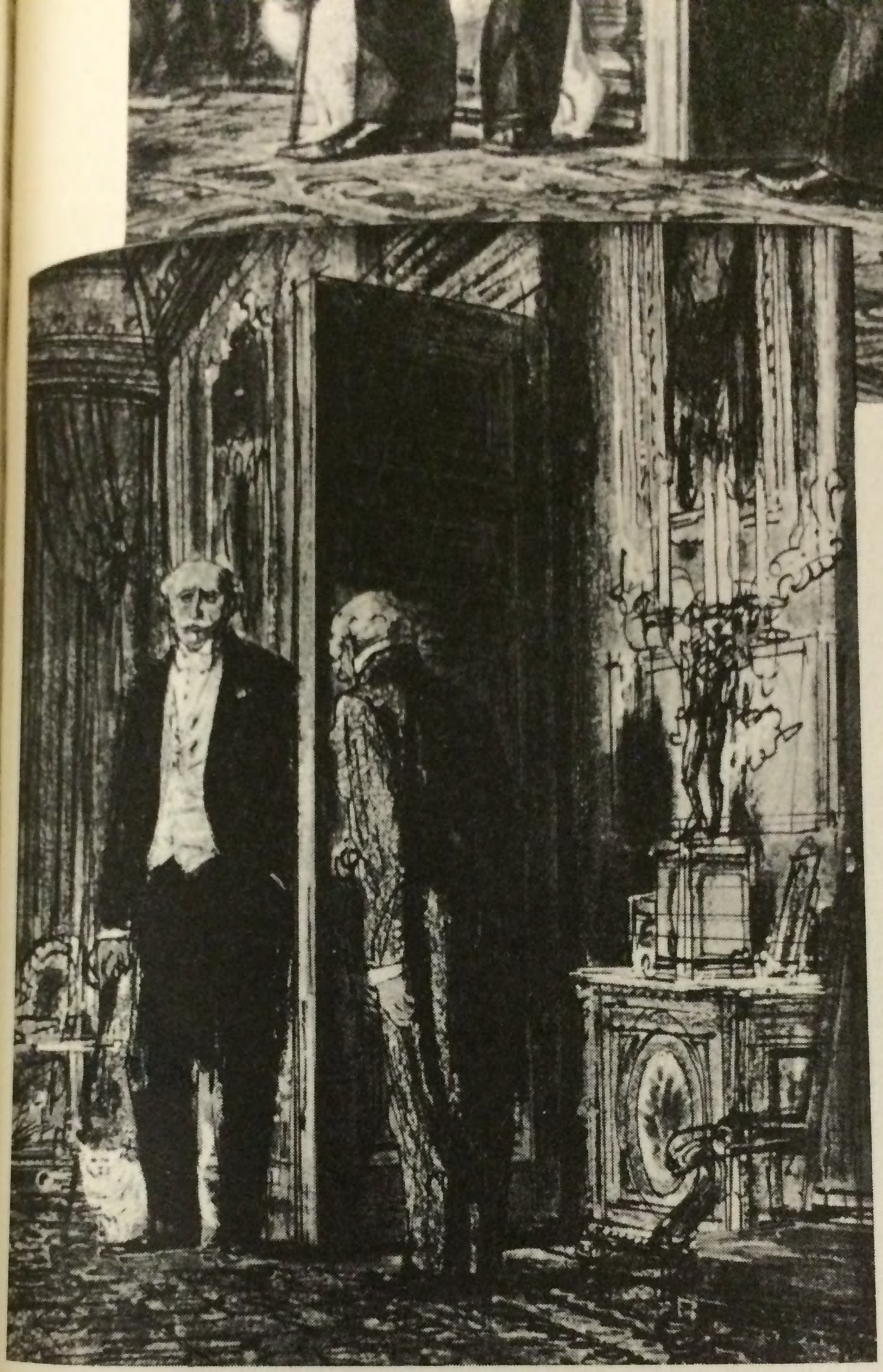

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Robert Fawcett

10 The motivating idea and the serial

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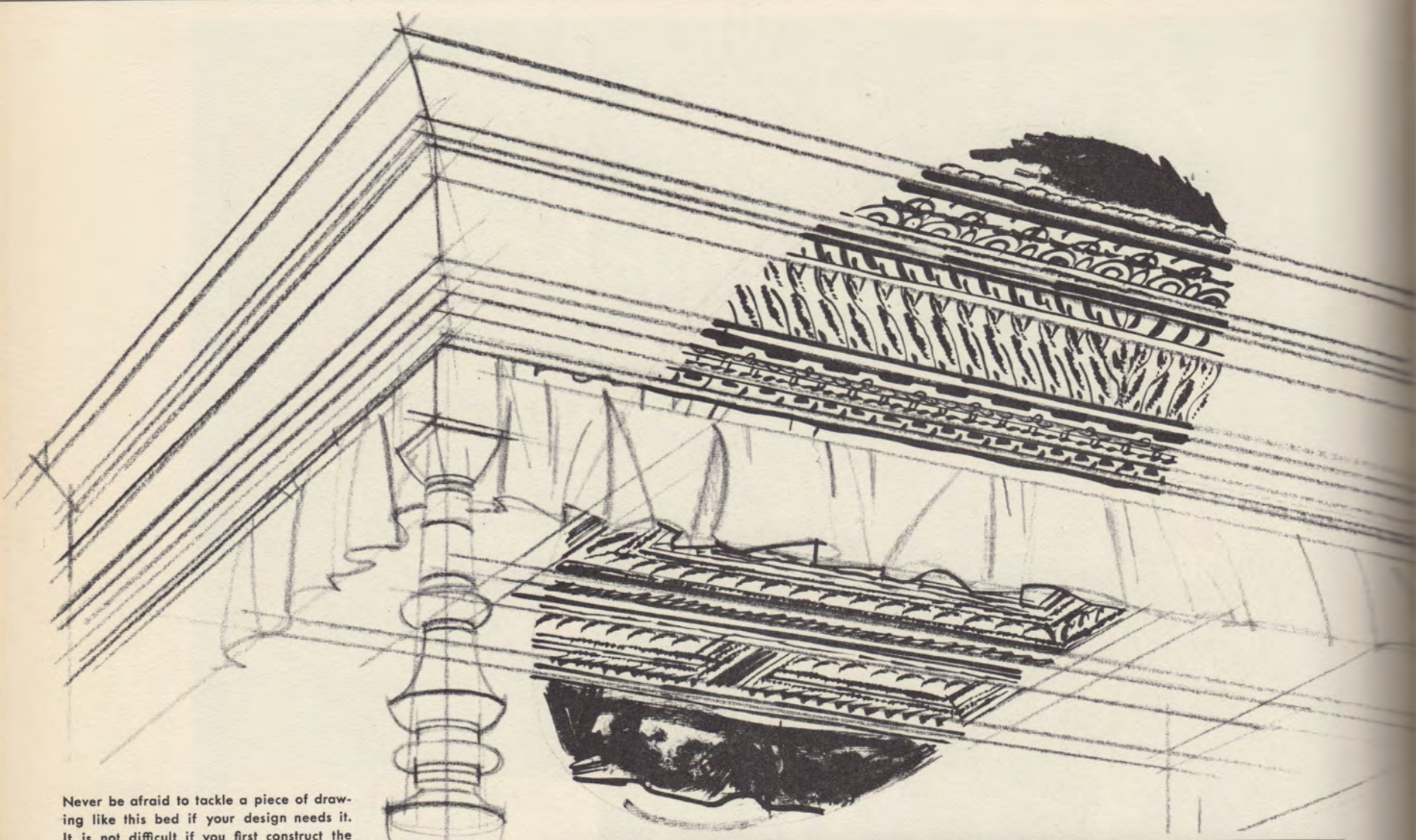
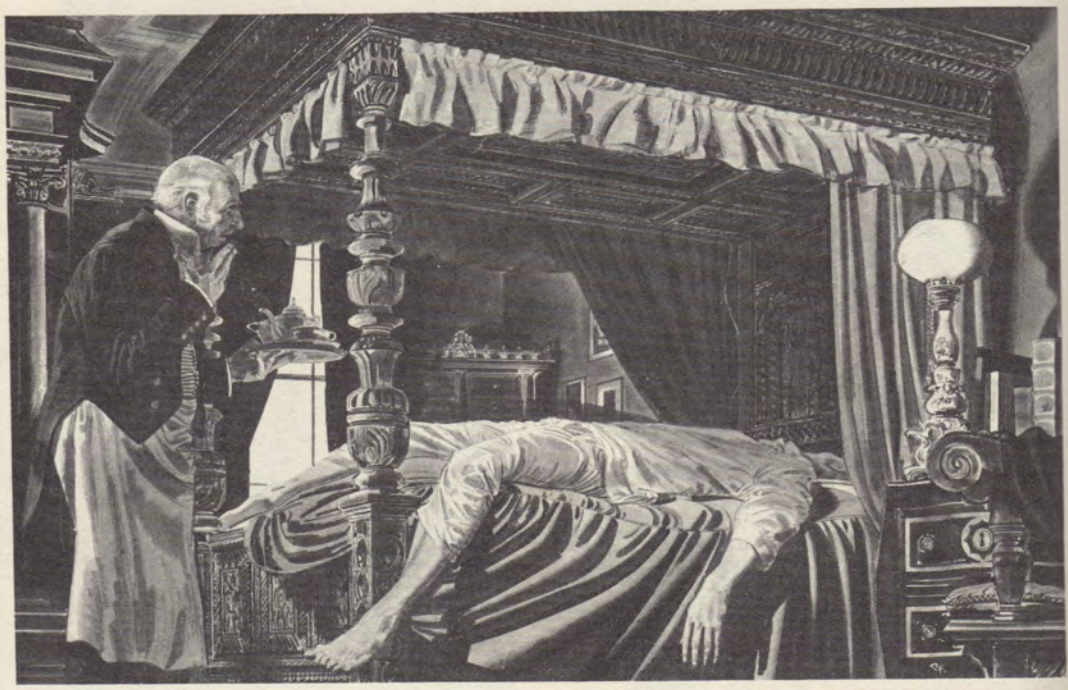


Never be afraid to tackle a piece of drawing like this bed if your design needs it. It is not difficult if you first construct the object (to get to know it) in the simplest way, and then add the carved decoration. I consulted a dozen library pictures of Jacobean beds, and then designed one to fit my own picture which contained details of the best of them. The bed is governed by the room perspective. I know very little of academic perspective — I only know whether things *look* right, *which is always the final criterion.*



Situation. A man servant enters with breakfast tray to find the old gent lying on the bed.

Motivation. *Time is early morning. Room is dim. Curtains still drawn. Signs of a struggle. Manuscript says Jacobean bed is large—would dwarf the figure? Make it still larger? Introduce other heavy furniture to create the musty odor of an English country bedroom. How differentiate between "dead" and "asleep"? Let leg and arm hang over. (Arm in this position would "go to sleep" if victim were alive, so he must be dead.) Struggle? Show bed clothes pulled awry, but be sure it remains part of whole design.* The bed towers over the prone figure — up out of the picture, and becomes the motivating idea for the scene.

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The motivating idea and the serial

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Opening picture of a mystery serial.

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The serial

The serial has its own problems, not the least of which is to retain picture interest over sometimes as many as eight installments. "One shotters," (single short stories) are always easier to illustrate. It is best to read the serial from start to finish, separating all the characters, and noting on a sheet as you read, every reference to costume, habits and every characteristic of the individuals mentioned. At the end you will have a pretty clear idea of how each looks and behaves, and also of the setting in which it all takes place. With the schedule of limitations from the magazine beside you (how much space to each installment, how many colors you can use and due-dates for each part!) it is wise to proceed with layouts for the entire assignment.

As you read you will imagine picture after picture. It should be the one most characteristic of that installment. Only experience tells you which of the situations it is possible to symbolize concisely, for immediate recognition. *The mental picture you see has no beginning or end, no shape or edges.* You will often see it in movement. This is when the process of boiling down to essentials begins. You are limited by space and to a two-dimensional symbol which must convey as much of the original mental image as possible. The final picture must be as provocative as you can make it. The first and second attempts will probably be ordinary and uninteresting, but slowly a motivating idea will occur to you and around it you build the illustration. In a nut-shell, this is the most creative part of illustrating, and the one on which you cannot spend too much time, as I constantly reiterate. The whole serial or the single illustration are either good or bad at this moment.

The illustrations used here were for a murder mystery, and inasmuch as I find all "who-dunnits" pretty much of a formula, I have to be doubly careful to avoid having my illustrations fall into a similar pattern, not

Robert Fawcett

Institute of Commercial Art, Inc.

The motivating idea and the serial

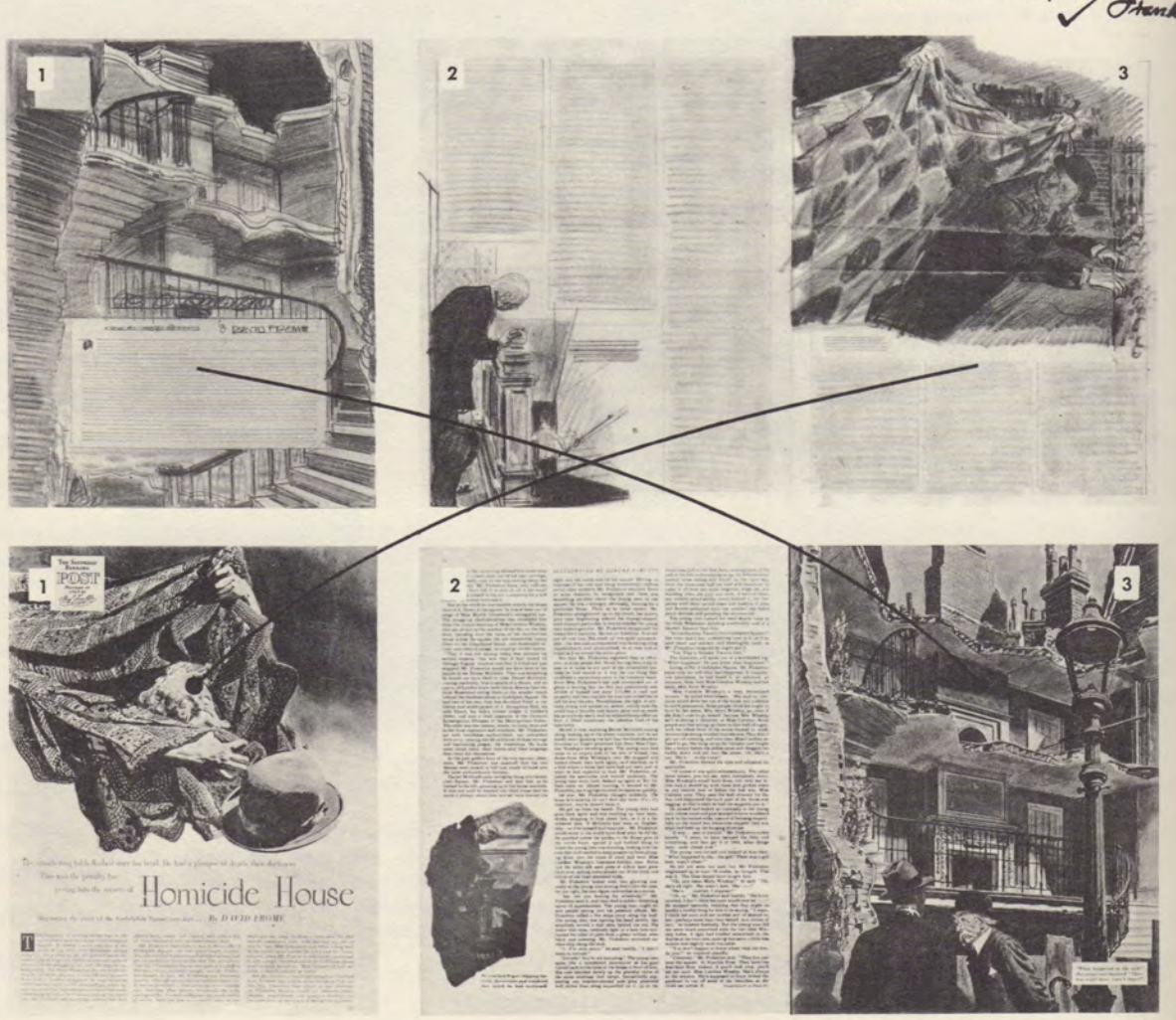
only between different serials, but also *within* each one. I used to do each part separately without a preliminary reading through, so that as the writer cast suspicion on each character in turn, my illustration automatically pointed to this suspect, without revealing the true villian because I myself did not know who it was. I now plan the whole serial from the start to finish in order to get variety into the pictures. One way to do this from the layout point of view is to avoid square pictures, or at least use them with contrasting vignettes, and this I have done with the accompanying example. I do not show you the illustrations for the whole story, but only the first few installments.

Illustrators are not particularly fond of magazine serials, especially mysteries, because at the beginning we are given three pages in full color when the author is doing little more than introducing characters. When, toward the end, things are really breaking loose, we find ourselves with single pages towards the back of the book, in one or two colors, competing with soup ads! Also we know that if the reader has started the serial, he or she will probably finish it no matter what the illustration is, and this knowledge removes much of the incentive for a striking picture — this and the space limitations. But the artist is on constant display, and it behooves him to overcome the problems I have pointed out and keep his contribution exciting to the end, if he is to avoid having the finger pointed at him with the inference that he is slipping.

I am fortunate in not always having to submit sketches, which are always the "idea" in incomplete form, and consequently liable to misinterpretation. I like to make sketches, or doodles, for *myself,* and watch the conception grow in clarity. I showed you a series of five of these for the Alamo drawing, and in this lesson I have chosen a group with the idea of demonstratting the variety of impetus which can result in a similar variety in finished pictures.

In this serial I based my opening picture on the author's title. It was a mystery in a London setting, involving a bombed house; the author titled it "Staircase to the Sky." I designed a full page, with a mortise for opening text, stressing the upward curve of the staircase mentioned. This would have committed the magazine to using the original title, if my conception was to make any sense at all, and I was told by the art director, as you can see by his penciled advice on the sketch for page 3, to "make this the head pic." I do these rough page layouts on a tracing paper pad to the same size as they will appear. I use the black crayon pencil and scribble freely, without models, and with the sole purpose of *fitting pictures into pages.* Then I take colored pencils and scribble in some color, but this stage is primarily for size and placement. Later I might do individual doodles of each picture, but only if they seem to need more clarification. The design of the final picture is always helped by knowing *what you are designing for.*

The switch from page 3 to page 1 required a different version of the same situation, as you can see. The motivating symbol for this is the afghan shawl, which is mentioned in the text throughout the story. Never try to do a thing like this without good reference material. Too many people have made afghans, and you would be surprised how tricky they are to draw.



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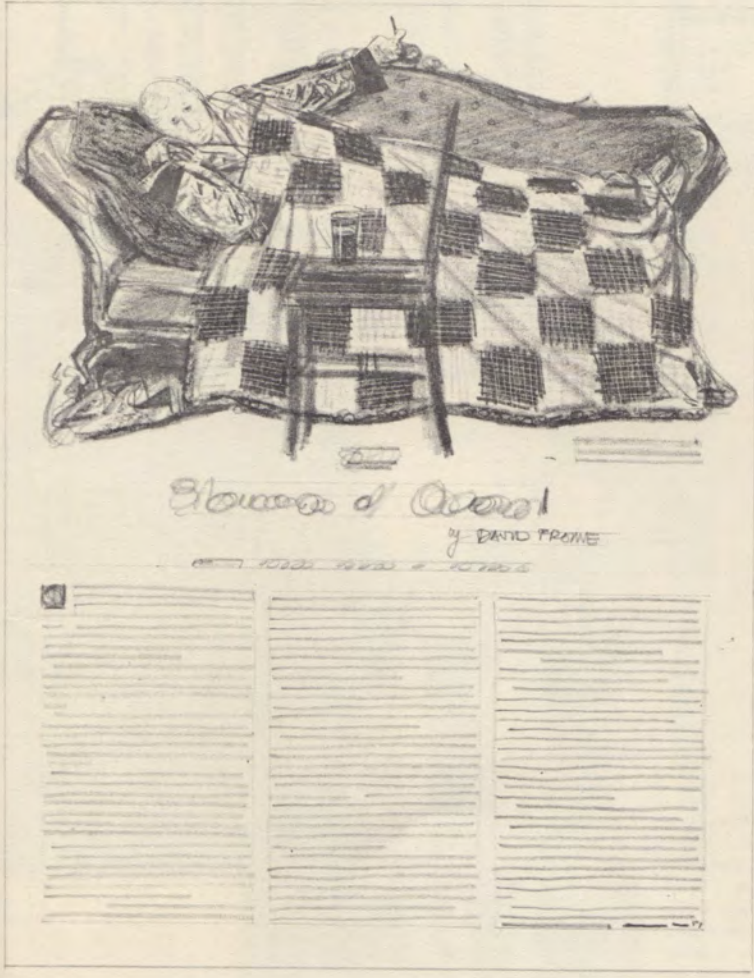
The motivating idea and the serial

Above is the study for a later installment—a single figure silhouette. The page layout and finished page are shown below.



Homicide House
by DAVID FROME

Mr. Pinkerton lolled on the sofa like a debauched potentate.

Homicide House *By DAVID FROME*

As the unofficial detective cozily took his ease, the Godolphin Square murderer chose a second candidate for death.

INSPECTOR BULL, of Scotland Yard, was assigned to investigate the murder of Pegott, the permanent valet for the flats at No. 4 Godolphin Square. When Bull found little Mr. Evan Pinkerton in residence at No. 4, his patience was immediately exhausted. For this same inoffensive, rabbity little chap seemed inevitably to get tangled up in murderous events, no matter when or where they took place.

The oddly assorted Winship family also lived at No. 4: Mrs. Scott Winship, a fragile, hesitating woman; her lovely daughter Mary; her tyrannical sister Caroline; and her ne'er-do-well nephew, Eric Dalrymple-Hughes. Caroline Winship spent most of her time gazing across the square at No. 22—her house, a bombed-out ruin of the war.

Into this unworldly group came Dan McGrath, the American who had encountered Mary during a wartime London air raid, and fallen in love with her. He found he was looked on with suspicion by the whole Winship family. They thought he was a detective trying to trace Mary's father, Scott Winship, who had disappeared years before and presumably absconded with a valuable painting. Pegott, the permanent valet, offered to tell Dan the secret of Scott Winship, but before he could do so he was strangled to death.

Dan found the body, shortly after meeting another Winship—Elliot, Scott's brother—and accepting an invitation to lunch.

Then came Inspector Bull. Dan chose this time of trouble to ask Mary to marry him. Then he kept his engagement with Elliot Winship, who strangely seemed to have forgotten about it. Dan was at first puzzled, then realized whom he must have been talking to the day before. He went to Inspector Bull.

"Scott Winship is back," he said. "He's the spitting image of his brother Elliot."

V

AT twenty minutes to three o'clock, the postman going indifferently about his business in Godolphin Square, came to more active life and set off toward the top of the road a short distance ahead of the small man in the shoddy gray suit and faded brown bowler who had come out of No. 4. Mr. Pinkerton, his furled umbrella clutched in one hand, nervously adjusted his steel-rimmed spectacles with the other as he glanced behind him to see if anyone was following him out of the house.

It was seldom that Mr. Pinkerton told a deliberate falsehood, and almost never to his friend and former lodger, Chief Inspector Bull, but desperate times demand desperate remedies. Having denied any and all complicity with Daniel McGrath, the Winships en masse and Arthur Pegott in particular, he had now come to a number of distressingly regrettable and even grim conclusions.

The first was that Mary Winship's father was not dead, but very much alive, and definitely somewhere in or about No. 4 Godolphin Square. The second was that Mr. Scott Winship could now be thought of only as having turned, in some way, into a cold-blooded, cruel and ruthless person. The third was that unless he was laid by the heels, they could all of them be victims. There was no doubt in Mr. Pinkerton's mind, among other things, that Mary Winship was right in believing her mother was being slowly poisoned to death, though he had not figured out how it was being managed. He felt he had what he regarded as a formidable body of evidence supporting those conclusions.

Why, Mr. Pinkerton thought, had he himself been murderously attacked, immediately after he had, in a way, pretended knowledge of Scott Winship's continued existence? Why had Pegott, who had been listening at the keyhole, and who had, or claimed to have, definite knowledge of Winship and his original crime, been brutally

(Continued on Page 52)

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT FAWCETT

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Robert Fawcett

14 The motivating idea and the serial

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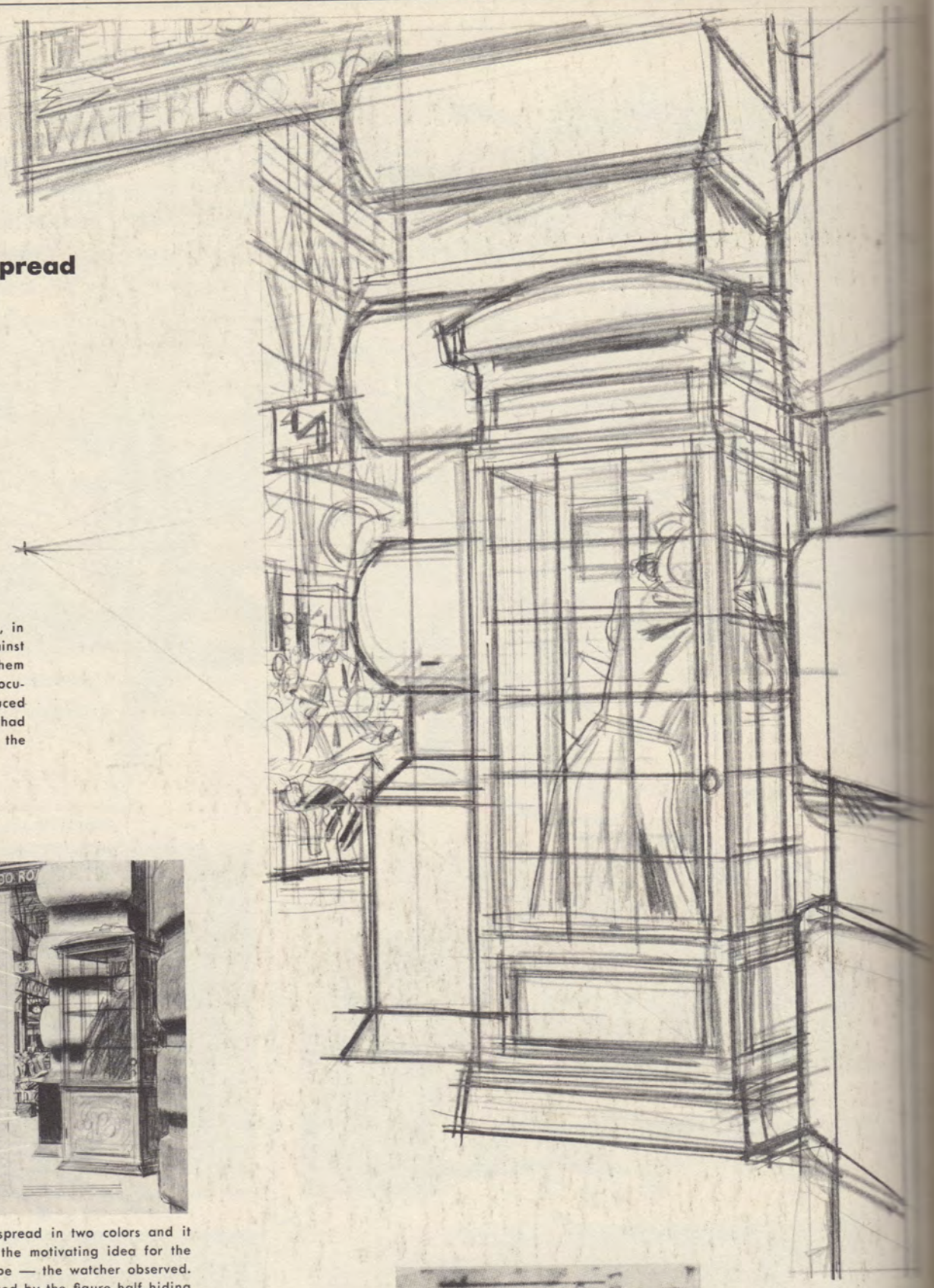
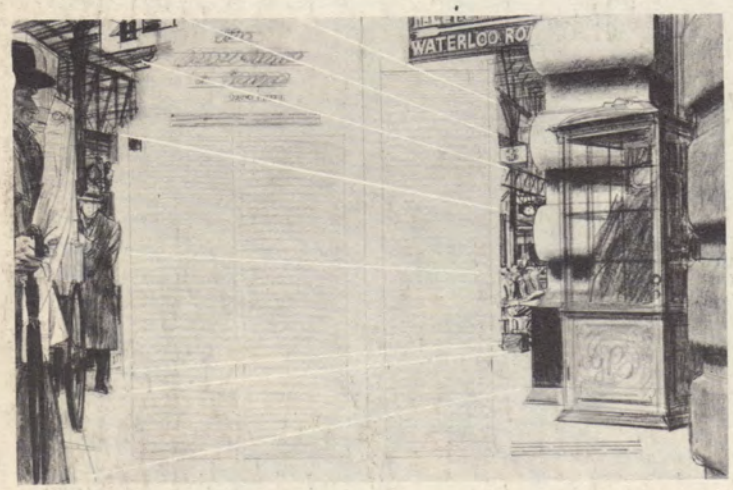
The serial spread



One of the tissue sketches for the right-hand page, in which I am trying to play different perspectives against each other for visual effect, at the same time having them contribute to a scene which must make sense. I had documentation for the railroad station, which is reproduced here, and also for an English phone booth, which I had to return. This tissue is the attempt to co-ordinate the different elements.



The second installment for the same serial was a spread in two colors and it provides an example of a page layout becoming the motivating idea for the illustration. The situation is of the movie thriller type — the watcher observed. Nothing is happening, yet a reader interest is aroused by the figure half hiding his face in a newspaper as he watches the girl in the phone booth, while he himself is being furtively observed by a third character. The scene takes place in Waterloo Station, London, which I remembered well. I wanted to get away from a square picture, and the idea occurred to me to use the whole two pages as my area, ignoring the type which would intervene between two parts of the action. White lines indicate the extension of the steel structure of the station — the one thing I could use to tie these two together compositionally.

This small photograph from my scrap file (folder — London, R. R. Stations) gave me the hint from which I constructed the quite ugly stone pier, which is characteristic of Waterloo station. I draw things as I see them, and by so doing I hope to inject *character* into the scene, the exact character of the particular locale.

Robert Fawcett

The motivating idea and the serial

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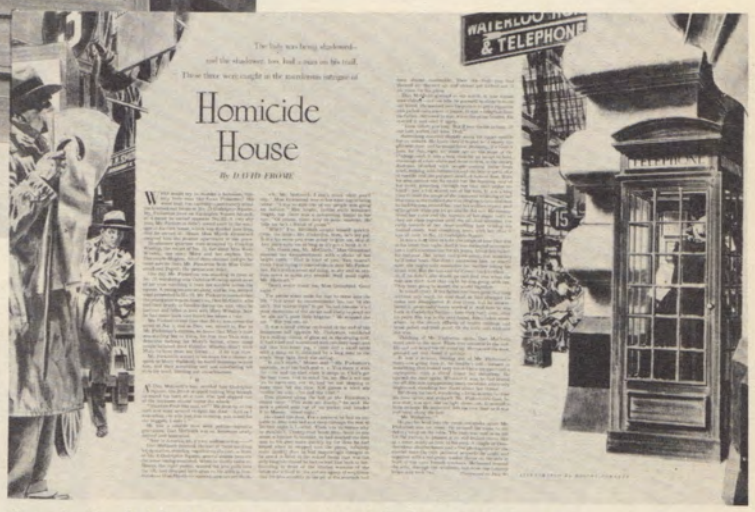
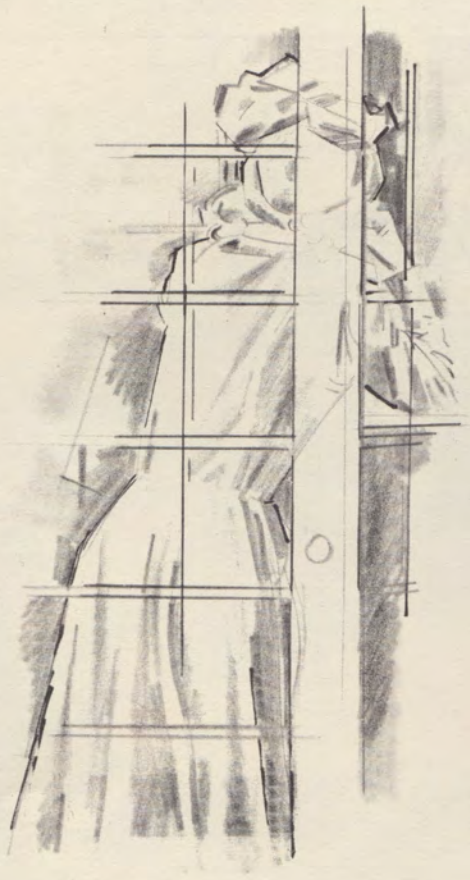
The working-size sketch was drawn with the two sides in correct relationship to each other, to be certain that my perspective was correct. Later I moved them together and completed the two halves on the same sheet of board in the relationship shown here, without altering the original perspective. *The page layout* is the motivating idea of this illustration and gave meaning to the details, one of which is the use of all the lettering I could find as part of the composition. Note the direction sign above, the theatrical poster behind the third figure and the prominence given to the platform numerals, and *how they are used to enliven the design.*



Here is the finished picture reproduced in the magazine.



I never hesitate to pose and photograph a model in a case like this. My wife posed in a costume as nearly like the one described in the manuscript as we could contrive. You can see in this small sketch that I used the documentation for one purpose only, to design the figure within the phone booth so that the structure and window divisions did not obscure anything of vital importance to the action. Remember that this figure is one of three, and although she is within the booth, the idea of the trio must not be lost. In the action of the pose there is much which is expressive, other parts which are less so — dead areas. By cunningly arranging the position of the booth with the figure, and with the slightest amount of distortion, the "live" areas are preserved and the action of a girl phoning is conveyed. The eye sees the figure before it sees the booth. This is one of the great contributions of the photograph to documentation. It allows you to juxtapose and design for a purpose, *but only imagination supplies the purpose.*

Robert Fawcett

16 The motivating idea and the serial

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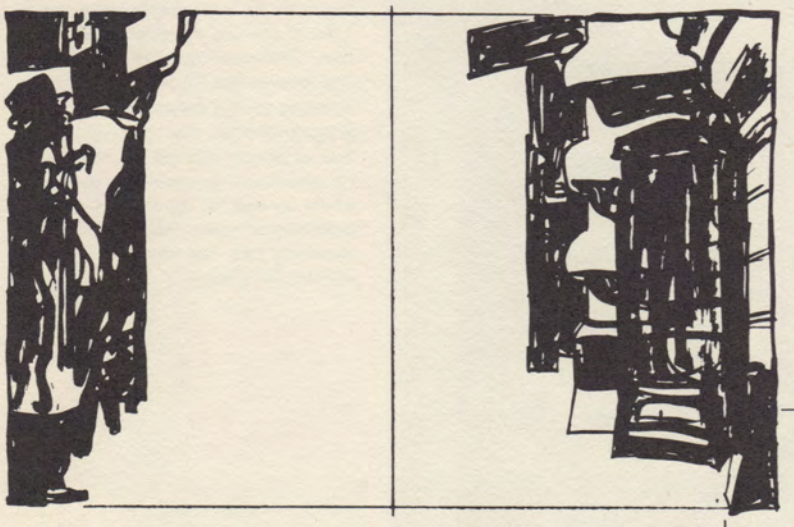
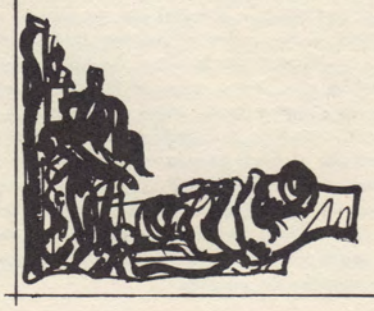


When I take a group of these serial illustrations and silhouette them, you see that it is possible to get a good deal of variety into what could be a monotonous series. Of course, installments in *The Saturday Evening Post* appear a week apart and the monotony of square pictures might not be noticed, but these contributions to more interesting pages are typical of the small things which go to make the complete illustrator.

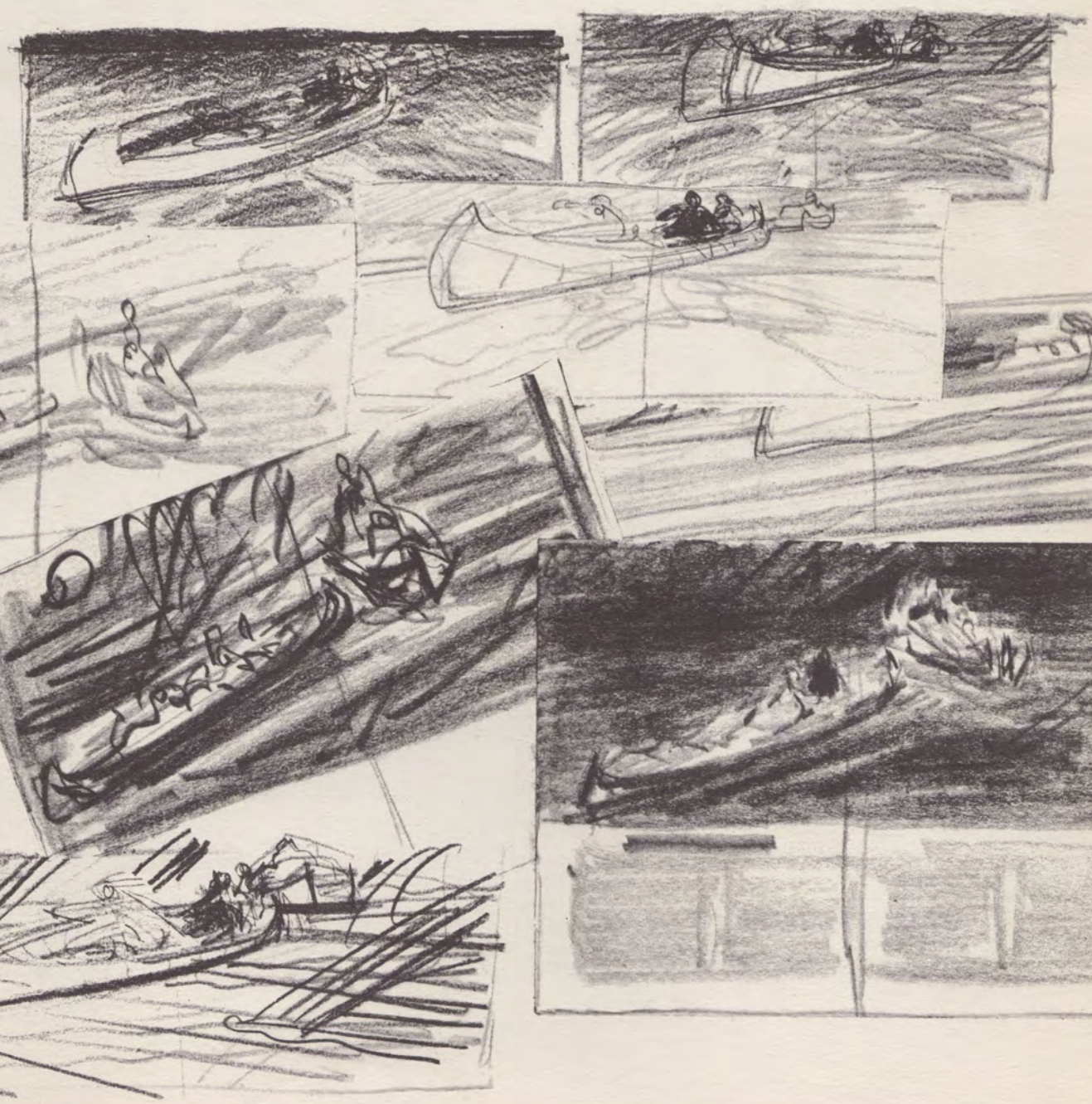


Conclusion

In this course I have tried to make clear to you my procedure of work and the reasons for it. Now as I conclude I would like to take one picture — an important one — and go over it in detail. That it will be repetitive, I admit. I am going to risk boring you in order to emphasize that to me this is not an academic theory, it is my *actual working method*. Theory is all right, but it has to be proved, so I will again take you quickly through an assignment from beginning to end. With this, the exposition of my working method is concluded. My one aim has been to try to be informative, to make things clear; I only hope I have been successful.

Painting of Marquette for *Holiday*

I had been prepared for this assignment over the phone, and the situation had been described vaguely. I knew that it was to occupy the same space "The Alamo" (Lesson 5) had. I also knew it had been recorded that there were two canoes in the expedition, accommodating seven men in all, including Joliet, the trader and Indians. In addition, Marquette's own account spoke of the spring floods, and large floating islands of trees which threatened them constantly. I had been told nothing on the phone except to expect the layout and a page of manuscript – yet I immediately knew what the difficulty was going to be. It was how to get two canoes and seven men into a picture and gracefully bridge that gutter between the two pages! I found myself abstractedly scribbling at odd times in an effort to arrange the elements. A canoe on each page was no good, and if one canoe bridged the gutter, how many occupants should it have? Should Marquette be on the right or left-hand page? I saw one page devoted entirely to water, the other to the two craft. Since I was unwilling to make a picture and trust to luck where the break in the middle would occur, it became almost a mathematical problem. Whichever way I thought of it, that gutter kept imposing itself, but by the time the layout and manuscript arrived I had pretty well decided how it should be. I tell you this to try to impress you with the degree of concentration your work sometimes demands, and as proof of this I reproduce just a few of the scribbles below. They don't look like much, but they served a purpose.



Here are several of the many sketches I made for the painting of Marquette for *Holiday*. The three largest sketches are reproduced actual size.

Robert Fawcett

18 Conclusion

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These two color sketches were submitted to *Holiday*, and the top one was chosen. These were done quickly and freely in casein tempera. In places, the color was applied thickly with a palette knife as I wanted to be left free to make considerable refinements in the finish.

This is a useful stage and one not to be avoided. Two sheets of tissue are taped together, and, with a large brush and some diluted ink, I try to see the picture at finished size. You see that the final decision of placing the figure of Marquette had not been made. Here, he is still on the left. But by working roughly I am able to approximate some of the drama and movement that I want to retain in the finished illustration. I keep it loose, but rhythmic, and try to establish the most important dramatic shapes.

Using pencil in this second tissue, I return to the distribution of the occupants of the canoes and their action. Marquette is now back on the right-hand page where he belongs, but I still do not like the action of the Indian in front, or the fact that there are four in this canoe. The last man in the first canoe is being moved to the second craft, making a three and four division which I like better. Marquette is just to the right of the gutter — the most eye-catching position as the reader turns the page. Having made these decisions I turn to a third tissue.

Now it is worked out fairly comprehensively. I have taken some action pictures of men paddling, and have somehow decided upon the posture of the priest, a trifle apprehensive, but on the whole determined. From the first rough scribble I have chosen some shapes of water and floating trees, but I think it is always better not to carry this too far. It is much better to leave as much free invention as possible for the final rendering, unless I find I have expended myself in the preliminaries. This then is as far as I carried the planning stage, and I traced this down onto the usual large sheet of hot-pressed Whatman board.

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Conclusion

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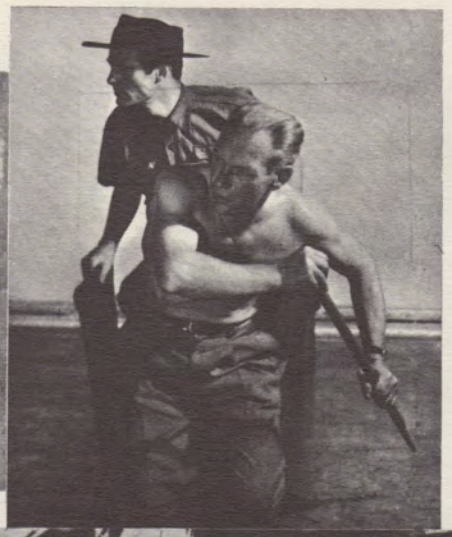
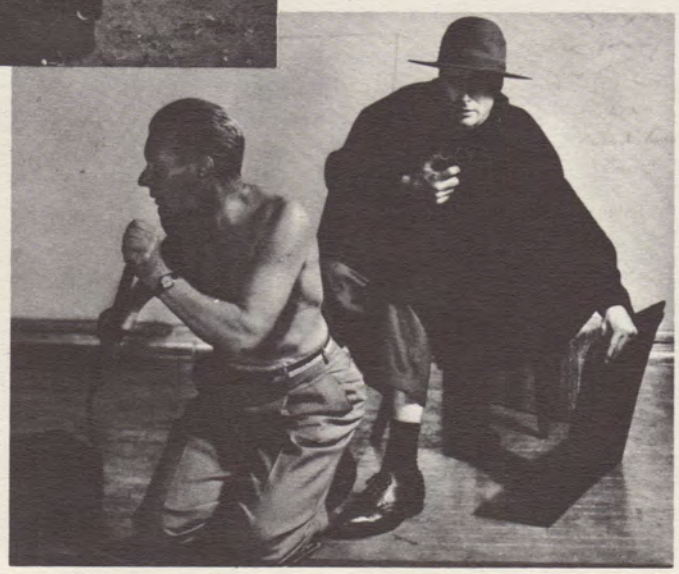
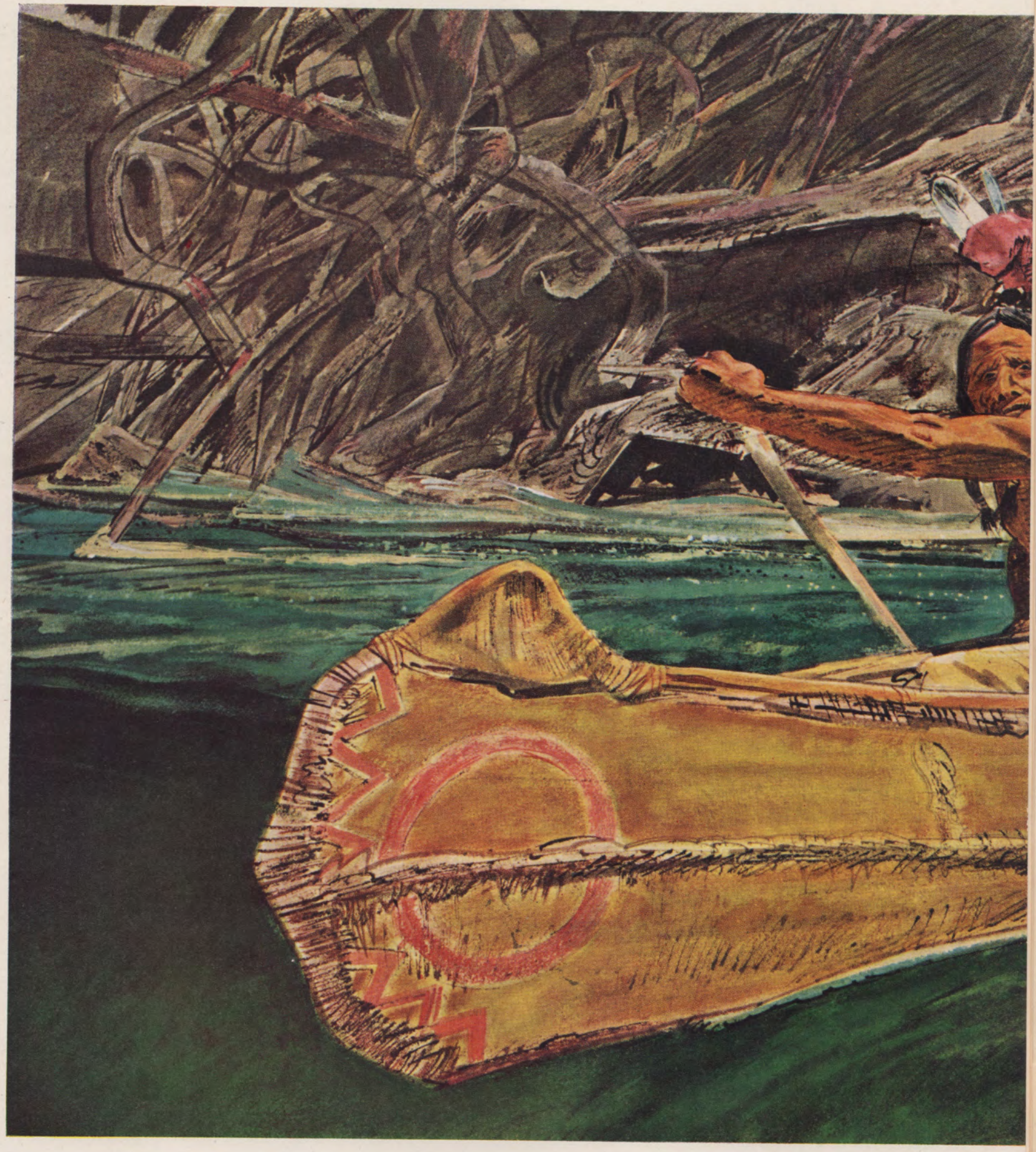


This progressive, after I had been working in ink for a couple of hours, shows you again how I search for shapes and forms on which to build the movement of the whole picture. I have forgotten the gutter now, and can concentrate on other things — the character and action of individual figures, rhythmic, fluid shapes against angry ones, trying to preserve a rigidity in the picture structure and at the same time retain the sweep and movement of the canoes as they avoid the menacing trees.

Courtesy Holiday

Here and at the top of the page are some of the pictures I took to aid me in establishing the action and lighting. I think I used them and that they did not use me which is as it should be.



On the right is a reprint of the finished picture. I always have to come to an arbitrary decision to stop. When I stopped, I had been working for over a day in opaque tempera and casein, since there is literally no limit beyond which one could go, refining and clarifying. One thing leads to another, and after a while the picture would change its character entirely. Color is heightened or grayed down, and the original black line structure is lost wherever possible. This is not a mechanical smoothing out, however. Each application of the brush should be dictated by picture structure right to the end. And with this I come to the end of a normally busy month.